

Vashti...

A ROMANCE
OF THE
WHEEL

BY

MARVEL KAYVE





VASHTI, OLD AND NEW;

OR

THE ETERNAL FEMININE.

A ROMANCE OF THE WHEEL.

—A Dramatic Idyl—

BY

MARVEL KAYVE.

“Behind the clouds the starlight lurks,
Through showers the sunbeams fall;
For God, who loveth all his works,
Has left his hope with all.”—WHITTIER.

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TO HIM WITH THE BIG HEART

And the royal nature, whose right hand knoweth not the doing of his left; who in this cold print shall be nameless, even as his deeds are elsewhere recorded; on whom falls a gentle rain of blessing, coming from the sweet toilers whom he hath befriended; with whom he hath broken the bread of a sympathy woman-like, which is divine-like—who are by hundreds and by thousands in this one city by the lake; one who hath ever had a tender heart and an open hand for the unfortunate, for the needy, or the aspiring ones, who to him are a sisterhood or a brotherhood and of a common family; who hath a word of cheer for all who ask—and rightly—for honest and independent bread, or a modicum of the bounty of a universal Father who was not in fault, as many of us seem to say, when He made no reserve of good for any elect of sex. With these other lowly ones of earth do I say, God bless him, and give us a thousand-fold increase of his kind.

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PAGE BY PAGE.

A CONVERSATION.		Life is Purpose.....	17
INTRODUCTION.		Old Folks' Song.....	19
THE ROMANCE.		The Dying Son.....	20
Asleep.....	1	Home Folks' Song.....	22
The Scroll—		Life in Death.....	23
The King and Feasters		Boyesen on Love.....	24
Vashti Made a Feast.		Lover's Song.....	25
The King's Command.		Accepted (Song).....	26
The Queen's Refusal.		Birch Arnold's Philosophy...	29
The King Wrathful,		The Tragedy of Living.....	30
Vashti Uncrowned.		The Underworld of Life.....	31
Masculine Terror.		The Woman Philosopher....	31
Woman's Contempt.		Heroic Girlhood.....	33
Man's Assurance		Sentimental Injustice.....	35
A King's Repentance.		Woman's Heroism.....	36
The King Consolated.		Woman in the Race.....	37
The Vashtis Arise.		Vashti, Rachel, Edith.....	38
The Vashtis Awheel.....	8	The Marriage Song.....	39
The Smaller Scroll.....	9	The Woman Teacher.....	41
Jacob and Rachel.		Prentice Mulford's Thought.	41
Meaning of the Scrolls.....	10	Nature is Life Perennial....	41
The Message,.....	11	Youth is Beauty, Life.....	42
Life a Journey.....	12	Choose not Black.....	43
Life's Highway.....	12	Dress is an Expression.....	44
Mother and Babe.....	13	Suit Dress to Present Need..	46
A Horoscope.....	14	What of Fashion?.....	46
The Word Creative.....	16	Woman's Right to Choose...	47

Must be not Man's Dress....	48	Shakespeare's Word for Mercy	84
Petticoats or Leggings.....	49	The Street Accident.....	85
A Law to Herself.....	50	There are Brutes and Brutes.	86
A Calamity to Avert.....	51	The Boys' Mistake.....	87
By our Beard.....	52	Brave, not Wanton.....	88
Woman Beardless.....	52	The Tragedy.....	89
Tag the Masculine.....	53	Grave, Where is Thy Victory	90
The Sex Intrinsic.....	54	The Boys Repentant.....	91
A Comedy.....	55	"Killin's Killin' ".....	92
Queen Fashion.....	56	The Loyals.....	93
"Dear Lady Crinoline".....	57	The Pledge.....	94
Evolution of the Wheel.....	58	Penalty Fits the Crime.....	95
Evolution of the Dress.....	59	The Boys Forgiven.....	96
Full Dress.....	60	"Gone Forever".....	97
Father Antics.....	61	"I'm Nobody's Darling".....	98
The Maiden Messenger 61, 62, 114		Awake.....	98
Better than Fashion's Smile.	62	What are Dreams?.....	99
The Beach and Bathers	63	"O Vashti Fair!".....	99
The Magic Line.....	63	A Strange Experience.....	100
A Strange Malady.....	64	Found.....	101
Consistency Unjeweled.....	64	Happiness.....	102
Queen Fashion Converted....	67	Not Found.....	103
A Masculine Prude.....	68	The Paradox of Life.....	104
And Woman Suffers.....	69	A Lost Clue.....	105
Woman Emerges.....	70	Is Life a Dream?.....	106
The Sphere of Love.....	71	Found at Last.....	107
The Comedy is Ended.....	71	Are Called "Lovers".....	108
Status of Protestors.....	72	The Riddle.....	109
Edith Assailed.....	73	Patiently Solving.....	110
Edith's Champion, Jacob....	74	The Puzzle Deepens.....	111
Free Sailing Ahead.....	76	Solved—The Best is Love....	112
Beautiful Vashti.....	77	Progress by Self-Effort.....	112
An Irate Lover.....	78	All is Real.....	113
A Woman for the Occasion..	78	Love and Hope Reconciled...113	
Edith's Sympathetic Sacri- fice.....	79	Fellowship of Men with Women.....	114
The Sabbath Class.....	79	Larger Life, the Ending....	114
The Lord's Prayer.....	80	L' Envoi	114
Jacob and the Boys.....	81	AFTERMATH.	
The Spirit of Humaneness... 82		A CONVERSATION.	

A CONVERSATION.

Said his friend: "When Jacob wrought fourteen long years for one he loved, it was for Rachel. Do you think he would have waited so long for Vashti?"

"One may not say," answered the book-maker, "for men have not all the same liking; but this we do know: of all the characters or types of womanhood in history, none are more beautiful than is Vashti. Remember that King Ahasuerus repented him very speedily of his drunken folly; and only the laws of the Medes and Persians (that even a king could not alter) forbade him calling back to his arms one of whom he knew he was not worthy—one whose self-respect was stronger than the command of a king.—No, there was no fault in the Vashti of history, unless it were a fault to be too advanced for the masculinity (and it may be for the femininity) of her day."

"Fourteen years—even seven—is a long time to wait for a woman!"

"True, man is not the most patient of animals; but fourteen years in Jacob's time was really no longer than a few months are now."

"Perhaps you are right," said his friend, resignedly; "and it may be that if the Jacobs of the coming time do not rise a little above the level of the Ahasueruses and the Memucans of old, the Vashtis of the future will make them wait, however unwillingly, even longer than Jacob waited for Rachel!" Then he added, reflectively, "The Ahasueruses of old seem to have assumed the right to fix the standard of feminine conduct, and yet to have placed it lower than woman herself would choose to have it!"

"Man's standard for woman was certainly lower than the standard of the Vashtis," responded the book-maker, "and who will say it is not true even in our own day?"

"Well, whether we will or no, a change is in the air. We may as well welcome the new order," continued his friend, philosophically; "and the reign of one who has begun to have her own way."

"And the same old, sweet way, after all," added the book-maker.

INTRODUCTION.

Soul pictures are so real, it is almost impossible to interpret them by any other than soul language; and it was not the words, but the soul, which they so graphically and tenderly interpreted, that brought the glow of appreciative response, when following, at first with interest and at last with unwonted eagerness, this story in verse: *VASHTI, OLD AND NEW*; which is the story of the "new woman," who is indeed no other than the true woman of all the centuries.

"Original and unique" was my comment in the delightful perusal of this story of beautiful Vashti. Even the name of the author had a flavor of originality. Curiosity mingled with interest, as I began the reading, but ere half a dozen pages had been passed, I found myself too delightfully carried on to be curious, and before long I had forgotten to be critical, and settled down with a feeling of satisfied anticipation. While I read, and after, these pictures flashed successively upon my mind, as if in

A WAKING VISION.

Then it was that I lay me down upon my couch to meditatively re-enjoy in the gathering twilight, and suddenly flashed before me in panoramic forms of soul pictures, the characters and scenes introduced by the "book-maker," with all their broad and timely lessons; and I lay entranced, taught of Truth.

There came in my vision, in letters of vivid light, the simple words, "New Womanhood," and, seeming to accompany them, the words, "Transformed through the renewing of the mind." As the increasing consciousness of all the fulness of those meanful words possessed me, I seemed to see them indeed typified in the Vashti of the poet's dream--Vashti, old and new!

First, Vashti, the Queen—a "Queen of queens." Have you seen her? How shall I describe such heavenly beauty? I seem to see her when the King's demand has been made known to her. It is in a royally-fitted apartment. Standing before her is one of her maidens, in attendance; she bows before the Queen, and awaits her pleasure before she speaks. The Queen, with gracious, queenly gesture, commands the expected message, smilingly—and such a smile, it adds a charm inexpressible to her face so marvelously beautiful, and reveals her small, white teeth, each a dainty pearl. But suddenly a look of incredulous surprise, mingled with injured dignity, chases the smile away. She rises, as it were, to a loftier queenliness, and her very face bespeaks a queenly soul. Her look is a mingling of surprise, injured womanhood and firm revolt. An indescribable quiet seems to clothe the whole form of the Queen, as she stands there pure, resolute and commanding.

I note more closely now her beauty. Her low, broad brow attracts me, then her complexion, well matching the dark,

fathomless eyes, well shaded by long, curling lashes, dark as her beautifully penciled eyebrows and her hair of midnight.

I had had a glimpse of her when her hair was falling in luxuriant half-formed ringlets round her perfectly moulded form, so matchless in its every curve and outline of beauty; but now it is wound many times in braid about her shapely head, beyond the modern fashion's ken.

Ever upon its soft, satin-like beauty falls a shadow from a crown. This crown is all resplendent with rare gems, but its brightest lustre is more than gem-like; it is divine, and seems, and surely is, a very part of her who wears the crown.

Her mouth is simply luscious in its beauty, and over the whole face, from brow to moulded chin, a purity and a dignity well match the purity and luminous truth in the wondrous soul-lit eyes.

Vashti is tall, but her height seems in necessary proportion to her magnificent and perfect beauty.

This is Vashti, glorious in her splendid birthright of female loveliness. This is Vashti, standing there in that supreme moment of her life, never more queenly than now in her humiliation, never more beautiful than in this the involuntary protest of her transcendent womanhood. Queen indeed is she and by inheritance divine, like the laws of her queendom of Media and Persia, not to be unmade of her true crown, by men and King combined. This is Vashti, one of the "King's daughters."

This is Vashti as she stood before me, newly recognized and honored in this nineteenth century; fit type of every-century womanhood, a sister twin of Mary, mother of the Christ. She embodies history of the highest womanhood of old, and

prophecy of the best to come; a type that finds its natural God-given place in millennial days now dawning. This is Vashti, old yet ever new.

Now, as in the dreamer's Vision, the picture changes, and I see the King. It were fitting that he were a king as Vashti was a queen, or by inheritance of soul. Contrast, not comparison or semblance, is the picture flashed upon my mind. Sensual is his look, and he is one who must be sensually blinded, as he feasts with fellows of his ilk—all on a common plane and low.

He is short and thick-set—not so tall as Vashti. Nor is his hair so dark as Vashti's. A beard he has that covers well his face, leaving little else than heavy eyebrows, and his blearing, blinking eye, of a soul besotted in the revelry of wine.

On his throne he sits, and gathered at the festive board are the men of rule and war. On the King are long garments, rich in texture, the habiliments of royalty; but worn as is the toggery of clowns. Of the feasters, some are robed in loose and flowing garments, robes of state, and others in the armor of the warrior.

And ill-fitting was the crown of this a pseudo-king, whose word was law, and enough to blast the name and hope of highest purity and loveliness itself. In my vision of this ruler, the crown will not rest quietly in its wonted place, but has a bent for slipping fore and aft and sideways; so the king has need to make adjustment often, which he does without a show of kingliness!

Mingled with the light and glare of this old feasting chamber, was a darkness peculiar, and invisible but to psychic vision. It is daylight, but an inky blackness of debauchery is there, as if an atmosphere within an atmosphere. It was as if

a cloudiness of darkness, betokening the soul's condition.

Within this darkness is a flash of light supernal and it writes a message; but all unheeded is the light and message, aye, and all the darkness visible—unheeded by King and feasters. A heavenly warning is this message, one of warning and restraint; it is as if an inward and an outward message. Repentance was the call of this appearance and its warning.

So, seeing not the word, there was no heeding—no restraint, and to the Queen was sent the fateful message that was yet to make a King repent—too late!

Now I see the dreamer; he is asleep, and he lies upon a luxurious couch, in the abandon of complete repose. It is a large upper room overlooking a most beautiful landscape. Through the large open windows are blowing soft breezes with joyous whisperings of happiness, lost at times in the low cadences of sad suggestion. The sleeper is dreaming, and the tenor of his dream-thoughts is reflected on his face half-hidden in a cloudiness of aura, as if an inspirational radiance were visible—to psychic sight. The face has now an animated expression, with a bright smile playing about the features, and anon a shadow flitting across it, as if a sadness were in the heart.

I notice that there are two of him; the one upon the couch being a shadow-like counterpart of a real dreamer above the sleeping form.

There has come suddenly into the room a troop of wheelers, "nor men nor boys, but maidens all;" and their movements are with "rare ease and grace, marvelous to behold." These maidens carry a huge Scroll which, the while they are unrolling it, the dreamer seems to read,

One of these is a leader, and she is like the Vashti I saw, who was queen, but this maiden is younger and, as it were, a modern woman. She has in her immediate following one of fairer complexion but not more beautiful. Others are grouped near by, and all are radiantly interested. Some are fair, with golden hair; some are darker in complexion, with a charm their own. They are very graceful in their grouping, and each one stands near a wheel that itself seems a life-like part of the strikingly beautiful scene.

When the reading is ended I see that the dreamer has a thoughtful look upon his face. The leader questions the dreamer, and all the girls seem greatly pleased at the answering.

Then they "backward turned, and wheeling, all in order, rolled up the Scroll;" but they leave it behind them, and "tied around with ribbons, white and blue, and lying, now unguarded upon a bank of flowers."

While yet they tarried, there fell upon my ear that sad Refrain of Life that the dreamer heard so often in the after Vision. When I wondered from whence it came, I saw that across the widespread landscape, with its beauty of hill and dale and stream and forest, a Highway and a City came in view. From the dreamer, to this City and along the Highway, was a dark and cloudy atmospheric current (visible only to soul-seeing); and upon this current, was borne the wail of burdened, breaking hearts that had yet to learn to find and claim and to manifest the power of Eternal Good.

In the thought of this strange scene, I saw that the dreamer had now awakened.

Now the scenes crowd and grow upon me, and to portray

them in words is to write another book. The dreamer has again been "soothed to slumber" by "voices musical," and I see Jacob of old standing in a field. Rachel is near him, and not far off is Leah. Jacob is not tall; he is a bearded man, with dark eyebrows, and he holds in his hands a shepherd's staff. Rachel has almond-shaped eyes, a beautiful mouth, and a forehead that reminds one of the Madonna. Her eyes are brilliant with truth and love; yet she is tender-eyed and childlike, as with a true simplicity—more than Leah, though both are beautiful. The mouth of Leah shows pride, and there is not the sweetness in her face that is in that of Rachel.

One now appears who must be Laban; and most peculiar looking is this old fellow. He is very dark, and he has an oriental garb, but not like anything I have seen before, even in pictures. Laban speaks to Rachel in commanding tone, and the girl flushes and walks away. Leah lingers, but Jacob's eyes are with Rachel. He will have no say with Leah, but walks away to where are standing cattle grazing. The scene closes with Laban talking to Leah.

The waking visions cease not; scene upon scene is pictured, as by magic, before my receptive soul. With the distinctness of life, the pictures come and fade. I see the maiden beautiful—leader of the girls, and often. Soon I learn to recognize in her the Vashti of our day. Like her of old whose name she bears, she is a queen of queens. She is regal because of her inborn fitness, and the choice of those who have crowned her in their hearts. Her outward grace, beauty, dignity, independence and self-command are but a necessary expression of a rounded royal nature. No fear of accident or of illness does she know, for has she not recognized the Source of Life, and learned

to control the forces and elements that were to be her servants? A sweet, contrasting simplicity is noticeable in all she says or does, and it makes her beloved by all. I claimed her forthwith as my own heart-friend.

Nor is this our Vashti too good for our dawning century, I exclaimed; and I questioned: "Where is he her true soul-mate, and worthy of the sacred treasure of her love—which with woman is ever one with life."

Then clearly came to me the words of Vashti when the reading of the Scroll was ended. Said Vashti: "Tell us, dost thou understand the meaning of the writing?" The dreamer said: "Methinks the meaning is so plain that he who runs may read. If one may be like Vashti of so long ago, well fitted she to be of those that are to come in years unborn. And Jacob, though he lived longer ago than Vashti, in his loyalty, his faithfulness, and manliness, a worthy type is he of centuries hence.—Read I aright?" And these were Vashti's words in answer: "Thou hast a heart that well deserves a woman's love, else thou hadst not interpreted so well the Scroll." So when I saw the dreamer and that he was one who well and worthily could interpret woman true, or old or new,—from somewhere echoed Vashti's words: "*Thou* hast a heart that well deserves a *woman's* love," and I claimed him Vashti's Jacob.

But the Jacob who worthily deserves the love of Vashti must needs not only be true as was Jacob, who served so long for Rachel, but he must have in him the best of the coming centuries. For man, as well as woman, will be demanded a divinely royal nature. Must the Vashtis be strong, pure and true? So must the Jacobs. When it shall come that man and woman instinctively shall express their God-inherited natures,

then will the Jacobs and the Vashtis first meet on their native plane—that of soul, and know each other beyond questioning and live millennial lives.

*Lo, a vision, clear and vivid,
came and chased all else away,
Now I saw the lovely Vashti
stand before her irate lover,
saw her pained surprise and wonder,
as she paused to reconsider.
Then I saw her form grow stately,
and I saw her eyes flash queenly,
as she drew off from her finger
a love-token he had given,
when they thought their souls
were wedded.*

*Quick the scene now changed before me.
Once again I saw fair Vashti
—at her side another lover.*

*He it was her true soul-lover,
and I noted without wonder,
that her constant, worthy lover
was the dreamer, was a seer.*

*Aye, indeed, a true soul-prophet,
though so oft he had been faulty
in his lack of trust and knowledge
of the visions in his dreams.*

*Knowing not they were God's message
writ indeed by God's own finger,
on the tables of his heart
and reflected for his seeing,
for his seeing and his guidance
as appeared in dream-like Vision,*

*As they stood, the God-wed lovers,
stood apart and plain before me,
In a pure and radiant vision
folded in a radiant glory,
slowly did a change come o'er them
and they seemed but one, yet two,
as they faded from my view.*

*One more vision in the darkness
clearly saw I as 't was given:*

*Vashti of the Bible story
stood a very queen before me
followed by a line of women,
till our Jacob's Vashti came.*

*Some were young and full of beauty,
as to outward form and feature,
some were worn with toil and sorrow,
but I noted that above them
and beyond them, stood their true selves,
stood the second self of each one,
and they all were truly royal,
and in beauty passing fair.*

*All the centuries' best and purest
were before me, in my vision,
and above each one a name flashed
—it was ever, always, Vashti,
ever differing, yet the same.*

*Some were queens, by earthly naming,
some were toilers for their bread,
—all were Vashtis!*

*While I pondered well the vision,
came a line of men before me,
and the Jacobs of the centuries
as the Vashtis pictured were.*

*Suddenly I surely noted
Vashti Queen, and queenly Vashti,
and the others all between,
slow began to near each other,
by a sure and inward drawing,
till, at last, they met and blended,
Blended fully in each other
and enfolded in that blending
all the Vashtis in the line.*

*So the Jacobs of the centuries
blended in one radiant manhood
—the true manhood of our day.*

*One brief moment there before me
stood the dreamer, nor alone;
close beside him was his Vashti
—Vashti strong and free and love-crowned,
stood they there a moment only
and were gone.*

*Long the visions, brief in passing,
scarce the twilight hour had fled,
thrilled, uplifted, by the lessons
taught by seeing, soft I said:*

*“He was right, was Real, rare poet,
when he wrote with vision keen:
‘Never poem has been written
but the metre was outmastered
by the meaning.’ ”*

ISABEL F. JONES.

THE ROMANCE.

I slept
—yet seemed I
not asleep; for what I saw
was real,
even as Life is real.
It was a
Scroll
—a long, long Scroll;
Before my very eyes
was it unrolled;
On the unrolling thereof
did I read
the writing thereon
and in
these words:

(History repeats itself;
as it was in the beginning
so it shall be even unto the close
of the Nineteenth Century.)

A Nineteenth Century King.

Now it came to pass
in the days of Ahasuerus, the King,
That he made a Feast
unto all his princes and his servants;
The power of Persia and Media,
the nobles and the princes of the provinces
being before him;
When he showed the riches
of his glorious Kingdom
and the honor of
his excellent Majesty;
And the drinking
was according to law,
none did compel;
For so the King had appointed
to all his officers
That they should do
according to every man
his own pleasure.

A Nineteenth Century Incident.

Also Vashti, the Queen,
made a Feast
for the women in the royal house
which belonged to King Ahasuerus;
and none there were drunken.

On the seventh day
 when the heart of the King
 was merry with wine
He commanded to bring
 Vashti the Queen
 before the King
 with the crown royal
To show the people
 and the princes
 her beauty;
 for she was fair to look on.
(But the drinking
 was according to law
 and none did compel.)

A Twentieth Century Queen.
The Queen,
 (a Queen of queens,)
refused to come
 at the King's command.

A Nineteenth Century King, Court
 and People.

Therefore was the King very wroth,
 (as well as drunken,)
 and his anger
 burned in him.

Then the King said
 to the wise men,
What shall we do
 unto the Queen Vashti
 according to law,

*Because she hath not
performed the commandment
of the King Ahasuerus?
And Memucan answered
before the King
and the princes:
Vashti the Queen
not only to the King
hath done wrong,
But wrong also
to all the princes
and to all the people.*

*Nineteenth Century Justice.
(Kicking against the pricks.)*

*If it please the King
let there go from him
a royal commandment,
And let it be written
among the laws
of the Medes and Persians,
That it be not altered,
that Vashti come no more
before King Ahasuerus.
(And, lo! until the Nineteenth Century
—till at its very close—
Was it not altered
that for all the Vashtis
the kings made royal commandment.)
And let the King
give her royal estate
unto another better than she
—(Better than she
who was good enough
for the Twentieth Century).*

A Nineteenth Century Conscience.

*When it shall be reported
that the King Ahasuerus
commanded*

*Vashti the Queen
to be brought in before him,
but she came not,*

*This doing of the Queen
shall go abroad
unto all women*

*So that they in their eyes
shall despise
their husbands!*

*A Glimpse
Of the Twentieth Century.
(Forebodings.)*

*The ladies of Persia and Media
when they have heard*

*Of this deed
of the Queen Vashti,
Shall say likewise
to the King's princes!*

*Thus shall there arise
too much contempt
and wrath!*

*(Let wives be subject
to their husbands
in everything.)*

Nineteenth Century Force.

*But when shall be published
the King's decree,*

*All the wives
to their husbands*

*Both great and small
shall give honor.*

*Thus did the King
according to the advice of Memucan
(—Advice that pleased him).*

Selfish Repentance

(As well never as too late),

*The Like of Which is not Unknown
In This Nineteenth Century.*

*It came to pass
that the wrath of the King
was appeased,*

*And then it was
that he remembered Vashti;*

*But he remembered also
that for what she had done,*

*(According to the laws
of the Medes and Persians,)*

*It had been decreed
against her*

*(According to the advice
that pleased him),*

And might not be altered.

Kingly Constancy.

Then said the King's servants:

*Let there be sought
for the King
fair young virgins,
And, instead of Vashti,
(too good for even a king
who belonged not to her own era,)
Let the maiden be Queen
which best pleaseth thee
(And this, also, pleased the King).*

*On the Eve
Of the Twentieth Century.*

*And, lo! it shall come to pass
that there shall be
Men of the like of Ahasuerus
and of the like of Memucan,
And that when
for their own pleasure,
(as men drunken),
They shall command
the doing of what
pleaseth themselves only,
They shall be despised
in the eyes of
all the Vashtis
Who will do only
what seemeth good
in their own eyes!*

This was the Scroll;
 But not alone
 did I give thought to it
 For in the unrolling
 was something more strange
 than in the words:
 While unrolled,
 the Scroll was carried
 by a company;
 —Not of men or boys
 —All were girls
 young and beautiful;
 Nor were they walking
 for each one rode
 upon a wheel
 —Nay, upon two wheels
 and with rare ease
 and grace
 marvelous
 to behold.
 In their hands
 (besides the Scroll)
 each one carried a flag;
 And the flags
 were of two colors
 —blue and white.
 These gave the thought
 of Peace
 of Love
 of Faithfulness;
 But of red
 there was no flag
 For the meaning of red
 was blood
 and danger
 not Peace,

So here was no place
 for it.
 Only in the young faces
 was any red
 And it was rich
 pure crimson
 Which had the meaning
 of Life.
 When the unrolling
 was ended
 I had read and heeded
 all the words;
 When this they saw,
 upon the faces of the girls
 There came a glow of pleasure,
 as of a purpose served;
 Then they backward turned
 and, wheeling all in order,
 rolled up the Scroll
 —and I awoke!
 When I awoke
 I was in darkness
 and (lying in my bed)
 I pondered long
 upon the Vision.
 Not as dreams
 are wont to be
 but as Life itself
 was the Vision real.
 Soon mine eyes
 began to close
 and voices musical
 soothed me again
 to slumber;
 When lo! appeared

the self-same company.

Now rolled together
was the Scroll;
And, tied around with ribbons
white and blue,
'T was lying on a bank of flowers
and unguarded.
Dismounted were the girls
together grouped
as if in waiting;

In their faces
there was gladness
—smiles of welcome.

None had spoken,
but a sign was made
by one—a leader.

Two forward came
in answer,
Holding now
a second Scroll

But smaller
than the other.

This did they unroll
and, in the silence,
I had chance
to read:

*And Laban said to Jacob:
Tell me what shall be
thy wages?*

*And Jacob loved Rachel
and said:*

*For Rachel
thy younger daughter
I will serve thee
seven years.*

And Laban said:

*It is better
that I give her to thee
Than to another man
—abide with me.*

*And Jacob served for Rachel
seven years,
And unto him they seemed
but a few days
For the love he had
to her.*

*And Jacob said unto Laban:
Give me my wife,
for my days are fulfilled.
And it came to pass
in the evening
That he took Leah,
his daughter,
And brought her
to Jacob.*

*And it came to pass
that in the morning
behold it was Leah!*

*And he said
to Laban:
Did I not serve with thee
for Rachel?
Why hast thou
beguiled me?*

*And Laban said:
It must not be so done
in our country
To give the younger
before the first-born!
And he gave him Rachel
to wife also,*

And Jacob loved Rachel
more than Leah;
And for her
he served with Laban
yet other seven years!

Having read the Scroll,
I turned inquiringly,
Awaiting pleasure
of the company;
One spoke:
"Now tell us;
dost thou understand
the meaning
of the writing?"

"Methinks," I said,
"The meaning is so plain
that he who runs
may read.

If one may be like Vashti
of so long ago,
Well fitted she to be
of those who are to come
in years unborn.

And Jacob,
though he lived longer ago
than Vashti,

In his loyalty,
his faithfulness
and manliness,

A worthy type is he
of centuries hence.
Read I aright?"

"Thou hast a heart

that well deserves
a woman's love,
Else thou hadst not
interpreted so well
the Scrolls.

Now let us
to our purpose here:
Thou art our Friend
and Brother;
We have chosen thee
to bear for us
a Message
to the world.

First tell we thee:
Not spirits of another world
(departed hence) are we;

Bodies have we
of flesh and blood
And (like your own) they lie
in pose and state
of slumber.

We are our second selves
together banded for a purpose
(and unknown
to our own minds
which have control
of waking hours).

When, in early morn
our bodies shall arise,
No knowledge
will have come to us
of this our doing!

But you—when you awake
will you remember
as if 't were a dream;
But we would have you know

that it is
more than dream!
In all your life
no thoughts have come to you
more real than this reality.
Your second self it is
now holding
pleased communion
with our second selves.

But to our Message
(lest the daylight come
and noise or murmur
call us back
to wakefulness
and ere our task
be ended)."

Then a look she gave to one,
who forward came,
and singing:

"Fix thou well
upon thy memory
What thou learnest
here to-night;
On the morrow
thou wilt waken
And, by writing,
thou mayest tell it
everywhere."

Then they sang, in chorus:
"Tell it, everywhere;
To thy Brother,
And our Brother,
everywhere
—to Man.

Be it in our

songs or speeches,
Be it in our
pictures fair,
Everything shall be
a lesson
Easy learned
and easy heeded;
Tell it—tell it—
everywhere
—To thy Brother
and our Brother
—To Our Brothers
everywhere
—Everywhere
to Man."

As the echo of their voices
died away,

Lo! I saw
a living picture
—nothing strange
but all familiar;

Yet, did it
(more than the singing)
touch my heart
with its refrain.

"Hark!" said one
in pose of list'ning,

"Hear the music;
Listen! Listen!
Saddest of refrains!
Listen, brother!
Thou wilt hear it."

Stronger did it grow
and stronger

Till it sounded

loud and clear.
There were words
but very simple
Words we all
have heard before:
"Life," they told us,
"is a Journey;"
And these words
were oft repeated
in the sad Refrain.
Why (I thought)
so sad the music
(though the melody
was sweet)
—Why are journeys
not more welcome
Than forever staying, resting,
in the home?
"Life a Journey is,"
the answer,
Came in music through the air
in sad refrain.
Well the picture with the music
seemed to blend
And I knew they had
a meaning:
In the picture
was a Highway
Long and rough
with many turns.
There were levels,
swards of green
and pleasure-places;
But of breaks
of holes and hillocks

there were many more;
More than there were
resting-places
were the ups and downs.
Hill and valley
rock and stream
—such it was
in all its course.
On this Highway
they were moving
—Trudging, coursing,
marching ever;
Were they creeping,
were they racing,
always were they
moving on.
And there were
of every nation,
Every age and class
and station;
Babes and children,
men and women,
Healthy, ailing,
strong or helpless;
Crowding, jostling,
were the many,
Only few
were helping others.
"Is there purpose
in it?
—In this striving
In this struggling?"
"Life's a Journey,"
sang the Voices,
As again I asked

the question:

“What the purpose
in it all?”

And I saw that they
who journeyed,
'Gainst the currents
had to buffet
Had all hardships
to endure
—Obstacles
to overcome.

“Is there any purpose
in it?”

But no answer
to our questioning,
Nor ever ceased the multitude
to move along.

Then I saw
along the way
a home;
And in it was a mother
crooning softly
to her babe.

Sweeter was her voice
than nightingale
or summer zephyr
(Aye, in all the earth
naught else so sweet
as voice of mother).

While we listened,
all the people
(who were journeying)
seemed to pause
to listen with us.

This is what she sang:

*O cradle here on my knee,
my child,
And close those eyes
in sleep,
Those beautiful eyes
of heavenly blue,
Wee drops are they
of Heaven's own dew
For a time to earth
now given;
I pray that the soul
that looks out of them here
Be kept ever safe
from all danger and fear
Till it find its way back
to Heaven.*

While the mother sang
the crooning lullaby
to sleeping babe,
A man of giant frame
and serious mien
(who in adjoining room
was writing)
stopped to listen.
Brushing with his hand
a tear away,
He slowly rose and tiptoed
to a near-by couch
Wherein were sleeping
sweet girl babes
—two sisters.
Long and lovingly he gazed;
then taking up a Book
He opened it, and read
these words:

Ruth said:

*Entreat me not
to leave thee,
Or to return
from following after thee;
For whither thou goest
I will go,
And where thou lodgest
I will lodge;
Thy people shall be my people,
And thy God my God.*

He read as one
who loved the meaning;
Then he turned the leaves
and read again
(But long he paused
when he had read these words,
and closed the Book):

*Fast ye for me
and neither eat nor drink
three days,
I also
and my maidens;
And so will I go in
unto the King
(Which to the law
is not according)
And if I perish
I perish.*

These were the words
of Esther
—Words of her who dared
displeasure of the King
(The King whom Vashti dared

to her undoing)
—Dared that she might save
her people and herself.

And now the picture faded
and was gone.
Long away upon the Highway
in a distant city
Were a gathered few
in Class, at study:
The teacher was a man
of gentle manner
—One who studied of the stars
and taught their meaning.
“She was born,” he said,
“July—this month—
The hour was four o’clock
and minutes seventeen;
’t was afternoon
and Sunday.

As I promised you,
we cast, to-night,
the horoscope
Of this new baby sister
of our little friends
—of Ruth and Esther.”

Then he spoke
of many things
about her life to be;
Whereat I wondered, for to me
it was not well
For man to say what is to be
the future!
Man knoweth not
(we have been told)
the hour or day;

How shall he know
the future
Which may be far surer
to his own undoing
than to his unraveling!

Not all could I repeat
of what he said
If even it were
to my liking so to do;
But more remembered I
than may be understood:

"Charts are maps,"
said he, "of forces,
In the worlds around,
which play upon us.
Now within the soul
is latent power
—'t is spirit.

Spirit may discern itself
and so it is that psychic force
may lift the veil.

This babe has future bright
before her.

Not unclouded is her life,
for sickness (even trouble)
is for her
As trouble is for all
of woman born.

But auspices are good
and full of promise
Of a life above the level
of the crowd.

She will have
a mind original
—even curious shall be
ideas her own.

She will dominate
through mind;
In books and thought
more than in art
will she find fields
to rove.

Friends will come to her
but better it will be
if they be few than many!
—This is strange to speak
but true.

She will be original
—big-hearted, unconventional,
yet lacking naught
in dignity of manner.

Will she marry?
Yes, and marry well—

One standing high
in office, or in state;
Nor think you she will marry
politics alone,
For that were marrying ill,
not well;

Aye, Heaven help the maid
who marries less than
character,
Or only wealth, or name,
or high position!

—Much of promise
has the future of this babe."

"Her name?" one asked;
 "Her naming
 is beyond the teaching
 of this Chart,"
 he answered.
 "Were she mine,
 her name would Vashti be,
 or Rachel.
 Vashti—Rachel!
 woman new and old;
 All beautiful
 and good.
 The new
 includes the old;
 It is the greater
 that includes the less;
 The good in woman
 of the ages past
 is woman's now;
 Though woman now
 to woman past
 owes all her present,
 What is better now in her
 —advanced, less fettered—
 is her own.
 Vashti—Rachel
 —woman new and old
 but always woman;
 Always pure and true,
 aye, lovely, lovable
 and loving.
 This young babe
 if they do call her Rachel
 it is well;
 Yet I would call her
 Vashti.

Now to our Lesson:
 choose thou each a Word;
 Let it be
 thy very own;
 In the Silence
 ponder on it;
 It will grow
 within thy being
 It will build
 within thy Soul;
 In the beginning
 was the Word
 and the Word was God.
 So thy Word—thy Logos—
 shall creative be;
 So will grow thy Soul—
 thy Spirit—by thy Word.
 Thou hast learned already
 that thy form
 is thine own Spirit
 manifest;
 What thou art
 (as men observe thee)
 Is expression—the creation—
 of thy Spirit.
 Choose thou then thy Word
 and make it serve thee.
 Let it be a principle
 of Truth, of Right
 Within thy Soul
 forever working.
 Know thou hast within thyself
 creative power and choice;
 For only thus
 couldst thou work out
 thine own salvation.

Aye, thou hast choice
 to build within thyself;
 And thou mayest build for good,
 or lesser good.
 Build for the best
 and sooner shalt thou learn
 the purpose of thy being.
 Choose thou well
 thy Logos,
 Build thou well
 O Spirit;
 Let thy choice be Good
 —what maketh most for
 Righteousness.”
 He paused
 and long I wondered
 that he spoke so well,
 and for the good
 --not evil;
 For I had looked,
 from such as he,
 for evil only;
 But I thought it well
 that in his teaching
 there was plan
 and purpose
 and not chaos!
 —When he paused
 a pupil questioned
 of a brother pupil:
 “Tell me—what the Logos
 of the teacher?”
 “It is Peace,” he said.
 “—And thine?”

“Is Sympathy,”
 he answered.
 Then I thought well chosen
 was the Logos of the pupil;
 Well in touch
 with all of Nature
 With the high, the low,
 the fallen,
 Sympathy will bring him.
 Sympathy would be a solvent
 for the ills and pains
 of others;
 It would draw all men
 together,
 It would be a bond
 of union;
 And I said
 I, too, will choose it
 as my Logos
 —I will choose
 as did the pupil
 —“Sympathy.”
 One questioned of the teacher:
 “Is it fate
 that has the saying
 in our lives?
 Or are we guided?
 —Are we driven?
 —Have we naught of choice?”
 He answered:
 “—Yes and no; is purpose fate?”
 Then it is fate to live,
 to move, to have our being;
 Life has purpose,
 Life *is* purpose;

Yet impelled are we
 --not driven,
And drawn on are we
 --not guided,
While we all
 have choice.

Is it paradox?
 So Life itself is paradox;
Yet Life has meaning,
 plan and purpose.

If 't is fate
 to have a time for birth
And fate to live
 the life appointed;
Then our Life indeed
 has much of fate;
For when the time is ripe
 the seed is planted;
When the time appointed
 is fulfilled
 The Soul emerges
 into being.

Shall we say 't is fate
 to be surrounded
By the forces
 of our outer world?
Or 't is fate to have
 some knowledge
Of the powers
 of these forces
 All around us
 and about us?

Knowing our environment,
 and every force
 that bears upon us,

We invite and welcome
 --or forbid--resisting;
For the good
 shall we be not unready,
Nor against the evil
 be unguarded?

If 't is fate to live for aught,
 to live in power for purpose,
We may know that Life is fate,
 then we may say:
"Rejoice, O man, to live,
 and welcome--fate!"

Once again
 the picture faded
Once again
 the sad Refrain,
And the Voices,
 as I listened,
Sang the words
 in plaintive tone:
"This Life's a Journey
 --Life's a Journey--
 and the Highway
 is for all."

And I saw
 the throng kept moving
 always moving--moving on,
When I questioned:
 What the meaning
 --Is there purpose
 in it all?

The answer was an echo
 of the sad Refrain:
"This Life's a Journey--
 Life's a Journey;"

And the throng
 kept moving on.
 Then I saw a waste
 of waters
 And a picture
 on beyond;
 Now aged and feeble,
 sad and lonely,
 Two were sitting,
 singing low.
 Within sight of ocean
 sat they—
 Ocean vast and grand
 and sad;
 Sore chafing
 where its bounds were stayed.
 There in its sough
 was sigh and sorrow,
 In its restless swell
 was sobbing,
 —Voicing of Eternity.
 Grand monotone
 of Life and Being
 All-embracing,
 all-devouring,
 Loved and feared
 as is the human!
 Looking out
 upon its surface,
 Wondering of its power,
 its meaning,
 Sadly, softly,
 did they sing
 These homely words,
 and simple melody:

*We're lonely without you,
 our boy,
 While darkness
 o'ershadows
 the lea,
 Why stay you
 forever away
 so far o'er the deep,
 roaring sea?
 We've waited
 your coming
 for years
 While wave after wave
 beat the shore,
 And prayed
 to our Father in Heaven
 To bring our dear boy
 home once more.
 While they sat
 at open window
 Singing
 as I heard them there,
 Close without
 within the tree-shade,
 Listening all
 was group of neighbors,
 These were playmates
 of the absent one,
 of long before.
 Sympathetic,
 tenderhearted,
 Often had they joined
 at evening
 Gathered there
 to wait some message
 From the one
 in far-off land.*

And now from o'er the water
was another picture:

'T was a farmer's dwelling
—Homely plain
 and unpretentious;
Hearty, wholesome,
 not ungentle,
Were the manners
 of the people
 in this home.
Within, upon a bed,
 in restless fever,
Lay a man
 who yet while young
 was old.
There were friends
 around him
—Friends who nursed him well
 and soothed
 his dying pillow.
There was one
 whose presence
Brought him comfort, peace,
 and restfulness
(As always does the presence
 of a mother).
Near the end,
 the sick man
 to this mother said:
“You have been to me
 a mother;
—I have wondered
 why you loved me,
So unworthy am I
 of such holy blessing;
Only God
 can now reward you
For I know that I
 am dying

—I have naught
 to pay you.”
 Then she answered him
 —this woman beautiful—
 And smiling
 in her tears:
 “Already have I been
 rewarded;
 God has blessed me
 —Am I not a mother?
 ’Tis the mother-love
 he gave me
 that is yours;
 I have loved you
 as I hope
 Some mother of her love
 unstinting
 May have given
 my dear boy
 So long away and far
 from home.”
 “I am comforted,”
 he answered,
 “And I pray that you
 be blessed
 With love of son
 more worthy
 Of a mother’s love
 than I have been;
 I, too, am long away
 and far
 From her who gave me
 birth,
 And when I said
 ‘good bye’
 I gave her promise

I would write
 and tell her all my life:
 May God forgive
 my sin inhuman;
 Long have I
 neglected her
 Who never for one day,
 mayhap one hour,
 Has had me out of mind
 —me so unworthy
 —’Tis my sin
 hardest to forgive.”
 Whereat he wept.
 “Forgiven is the mother’s boy
 already,”
 Said the woman,
 “For she loves you yet
 —your mother,
 And you shall write to her
 to-night.”
 With this the mother,
 sweet and beautiful
 as mothers are,
 Took pen to write
 the story of it all
 —The wandering,
 neglect, repentance,
 But—the best of all—
 of love not dead.
 “Write it again,” he said,
 in tears,
 “I love you,
 mother dear,
 I love you now
 as ne’er before
 —my mother.”

When 't was done
—the letter sealed—
The dying man
said, faintly:
“Ask them, mother,
now to sing
the song I love.”

And then one sang
with tender voice
this song:

*The home folks
are the best folks*

*when you're sick
And from your own home
far away,*

*Though plain their ways
their hearts are big,
God bless them everywhere
we say;*

*When earth is fair
and Fortune smiles on you
And giddy Fashion
has her sway,*

*'Tis only then
you may not know
their worth,
For Fashion's way
is not their way.*

And then in chorus
sang they all
—The brothers and the sisters
of this home
so beautiful:

*God bless the home folks
tried and true,*

*We dearly love
their honest way,
The latch-string out
through good or ill,
God bless them everywhere
we say.*

“Yes—everywhere
—I—say,”
The dying man repeated;
—with these words
his life went out.

I was taken back again
across the waters
to the sea-side home.
All were there
the friends, the neighbors;
They had come
the dead to bury
—Father, mother—
in one grave
together

As, slowly,
from the cottage home
The bodies of the dead
were borne
The postman called
and left—a letter!

Ah! then I thought
the humblest life
may have its tragedy;
But is the tragedy itself
the purpose?
Is it of one's life
the ending?

If it were,
 there were no meaning
 —neither purpose
 or a meaning—
 in this life at all.

“No,” I said,
 “’t is not the ending
—End of life
 must be beginning
 of some larger life
 beyond.”

And then for answer
 saw I written
 on another Scroll
 these words:

“It seems a paradox,
 but we do know
 that such is Life itself;

Men who coldly dwell
 in science
 Tell us it is
 paradox;

For “Only as we die
 we live,”
 they tell us,

“And so soon
 as we stop dying,
 we stop living!”

So one wiser
 than his fellows
 (Long before
 the men of science)
 Spoke the truth
 of living, dying.

“We die daily,”
 were his words
 of wisdom;

In our living
 —in our growing—
 we are daily dying;

In our dying
 —in our failing—
 we are stronger growing.

Then is death
 not death;
Then is death
 but larger living.

Life is paradox;
 In life we are in death
—In death, in life,
 and always
 larger life.

Then what we know
 as death
 must be more life,
—It must be
 larger living
 —dying into larger life
 beyond.

I was back again
 from o’er the waters

When I read the answer
 to my questioning.

Now the scene
 was changed;

And not an echo
 heard I

Of the sad Refrain
 that haunted me before.

I wondered much at this
 for sadness fitted well

My thoughts of tragedy
 and death.

Upon the breeze there rose
 another melody;
 In it no note of sadness;
 neither gay nor lively
 —only restful, quiet,
 soothing, was it.
 It was moonlight
 calm and peaceful,
 And in list'ning
 to the strains
 all comforting
 I saw this scene:
 Beneath a tree
 on rustic seat
 a maiden sat
 alone.
 A pensive look
 was in her face,
 and on her knee
 an open book;
 While she read,
 a light flashed
 o'er her face
 As flashes
 o'er the heaven
 Aurora Borealis.
 A writer from the North,
 with vivid insight,
 Had expressed
 his inner soul
 upon the pages
 —this his thought:
 "Congeniality of soul is Love,
 enthusiastic and illumined.
 'Tis a sense profound
 of harmony pervasive;

'Tis not physical
 —it is for both
 a consonance of nature,
 strange, delicious.
 More than half its joy
 is being understood
 in all one's noblest powers;
 What the beloved believes
 the lover is
 As they sound on together
 —these two chords,
 and in embrace
 melodious,
 Reveling in eloquence
 and charm
 and beauty, joy,
 What happy speech
 audacious,
 What glorious heights
 of feeling,
 What flashes rare
 of insight,
 In so being tuned
 octaves above one's self!
 To feel
 in noble woman's soul
 The resonance
 of one's own speech,
 To have returned our thought
 enriched and beautified
 in passing through
 her mind
 —Beatitude is this
 highest of all
 which earth may offer,"

Now the maiden
 laid aside her book
 and fell in reverie.
Upon a cushion soft
 her head reclined
 and soon she was asleep.
Anon there came a man
 in happy mood
 low whistling.

He was looking
 for the maiden
 as it seemed,
And lovingly
 upon her form he gazed
 and tenderly.

He softly came
 and, with a scarf,
He bound her down
 in mock imprisonment.
And then he sang into her ear
 sweet words of love;
Softly, at first, he sang,
 as if it were his will
 that she might hear
 while dreaming.

This the Song
 —the words and melody:

*The joys of this old world
 are many, my darling,
Of pleasures of life
 I have tasted a few,
But all that life offers
 though doubled twice over,
In a balance
 were wanting, love,
 weighed without you.*

*This world, O my darling,
 were nothing without you,
I'd give it all up, love,
 and make no ado,
And take any world
 —any world they might
 give me,
If only, my darling,
 with it they'd give you.*

*Then come to me, darling,
 my own one,
 my dear one,
The dearest, the sweetest girl
 ever I knew;
I love you, my darling,
 so truly, so fondly,
This world were no world
 if it were not for you.*

*The breezes so joyously,
 wantonly gay, love,
Reveled in bliss of a kiss
 as they blew;
My heart, love, throbbed wildly
 —throbbed jealously wildly—
Whomever they missed, love,
 't is sure they kissed you.*

*I heard the birds singing
 so softly, so sweetly,
A message they told, love,
 I hold, love, 't was true,
And this was the message
 —that some one now loves me;
That some one,
 my loved one,
 was no one but you.*

*I'm going to win you,
my dear one,
my sweet one;
So said one wise bird
ere away, love, he flew.
Who sent the sweet message?
I fondly believe, love,
'Twas you—you, my darling,
yes, darling, 't was you.
Then a wee little, sweet little
word you might say, love,
It goes with a kiss,
won't you give me that, too?
If you had the asking
and I had the giving,
I'd say: "Yes, my darling,"
now, darling, won't you?*

The maiden wakened
and she tried to rise
But found herself pinned down
by loving bands and hands.
Methought her not unwilling
to be prisoner,
For small the effort
that she made
To burst the bands
so slight, so strong.
Then did he sing again
the words of pleading
—that she come to him;
Yet were her eyes not open
and she answered nothing.
Then he said, again,
with pleading voice
and thrilling:

*"With a kiss it goes
—the word, my darling,
—say it;"
And with that
he took the kiss,
and unresisted.
Once again I saw the lover;
it was moonlight,
quiet, peaceful.
He was singing
with the voice
of one content.
Such is the power of love,
and pleasing to me
was the picture.
This his singing
as I listened:*

*O for me
the Stars shine bright
to-night!
For me
the Stars shine bright,
shine bright;
My love has plighted troth,
her troth with mine,
And all my sky is bright
to-night.
The brook, the breeze,
the flowers, the sky,
All join
in sweetest harmony
To sing of love
of love so real
That all the world
its joy may feel;*

*O Star of Hope!
O Glorious Light!
O Love of Mine!
O World of Joy!*

*For now for me
the Stars shine bright to-night,
For me the Stars
shine bright, shine bright;
My love has plighted troth—
her troth with mine—
And all my sky is bright
to-night!*

Ah! Yes, I thought,
what power in Love!
And thought,
if aught there were
in Life
That might its purpose be—
its meaning, aye, its end—
it must be LOVE.

Again I saw the lovers
now betrothed
in good old fashion;
They their way
were wending to the house
—The same farm dwelling
that I saw before.
Then in old-fashioned way,
the father gave the daughter
to her lover.
—They were gone
—the children—
from the home
—All gone, save two
—the daughter,

soon to leave
Upon the arm of him
who won her love;
And one—a son,
who at the homestead stayed,
Who stayed that they
who could not leave
—The father and the mother—
be not left alone.
’Tis ever so
that one must stay
To bear the burden
(if, indeed, it be a burden)
And to comfort, help and cheer
the ones grown old,
As they grow older
and more feeble.
There is always one
to stay,
Who waits
till all have chosen
—Till for him, or her,
there is no choice
(Save that of love
and duty);
Then it is that he
or she
Are left to move along
the way appointed
(Way that after all may be
the chosen way).
Now four were gone from home
two sons, two daughters;
To the city
had they gone

—The city
 where the other sister
 Soon, a bride,
 would find her home.
 And there was aching
 in the hearts
 of them now left
 —An aching at the quiet
 of the home,
 the absence
 of the loved ones.
 Gone the songs,
 the merry laughter,
 Cheery voices,
 youthful frolics;
 And in place was thought
 of strugglings,
 Of the serious side of Life
 in the outside world
 of toil.
 But they choked it down
 —their sorrow—
 Did the father, mother,
 brother,
 And they welcomed
 him who came
 To take away the sunshine
 that went out with sister,
 daughter.
 And in cheery tones
 they said:
 “We shall feel
 that we have taken
 To our hearts
 another dear one;
 Not that we away have given

 one that we all love
 so well.”
 But their hearts
 their tears, their voices,
 All belied
 this cheery fiction,
 For they knew
 ’t was going from them
 into other living, doing,
 And to be forever after
 more and more
 from them apart.
 Though they hoped
 that love would linger
 long around them,
 Well they knew
 it was a weaning
 from themselves;
 That they often
 would be hungered
 For the love
 so deep and tender
 That had in their hearts
 been growing
 all the years
 —To go out now, in a moment
 (as it seemed)
 and to a stranger!
 What the claim
 of one so distant
 That it should be
 even stronger
 Than the ties of birth,
 of kinship,
 Or of all the years
 of home?

But the answer
 is a mystery
(Though full it be
 of meaning)
For it has no other reason
 than the mystic tie
 —of Love!

Again was I
 in Class:
And youthful
 were the students
—Youthful, earnest,
 buoyant,
At the Fount of Knowledge
 thirsting.
He who struck the Rock
 of Waters
Was one dreamy,
 introspective,
And he had for all the people
 of the lowly world
A feeling sympathetic,
 and most tender.
His the work to teach
 of Nature,
Of her secrets,
 of her wonders,
And they called the subject
 science;

But I noted
 in his teaching
He had turned the thought
 of pupils
From the cold, bare heights
 of Knowledge

To the deeper, warmer science
 of the human heart
 and need.

In sympathy I listened
 to the words
 that he was speaking
 as the picture
 came in view:

“Oh! the tragedy of Life
 —Aye, if you will—
 of common life.

’Tis the life of yours
 and mine,
Of king and priest
 of artist, poet, felon,
In the world’s great mortar
 ground together,
Melted into liquid mass,
 and by the iron hand
 of one’s environment
 new molded
 into personality!

Are we not one soul
 —both you and I,
And by the breath
 of circumstance
 but modified
 or re-created?

Aye, before this tragedy
 of living
—Its awfulness
 and question—
How we shiver
 —how to nothingness
 we shrink!

This surging, palpitating,
 bitter thing
 —We call it Life!
 And if it humble be
 we call it common!
 But we dig beneath
 the surface,
 And we find this thing
 created
 Is a sentient thing
 of meaning.
 Is it common
 when 't is groveling?
 In its very depths
 is tragedy.
 If it silent be
 and helpless,
 If accepted
 without question,
 If without a moan
 endured,
 —All the more severe
 its agony.
 Only He
 who life created
 —He alone can know
 its ending,
 And how incomplete
 the fulness
 Of the common life
 of earth;
 Only He can know
 how helpless
 Who upon the soul
 hath bounded

The measure of its own
 environment;
 For circumstance,
 as molder
 Of the life of man,
 seems hopeless
 As 't is merciless
 and fateful.
 Oh! the tragedy
 of Life!
 Underneath its commonplace
 all the tragedies
 are found;
 —All the tragedies, the epics,
 oratorios, romances,
 That enchain
 the wildest fancies
 of a world.
 Are they common
 —these the workers
 in the underworld of life?
 True, their toiling
 is for others,
 And for all their
 higher needs
 They themselves
 are destitute.
 Priest and teacher,
 yeoman, laborer,
 Does their toiling
 and their needing,
 Aye, their starving,
 make them common?
 Of poetry and feeling,
 of sentiment and loving,

Is there any more
 in culture
 Than there is
 in common toil?

 What is poetry
 but Nature,
 What is sentiment
 but Soul
 Which all living
 may but broaden,
 Which no culture
 can create?

 Let us claim our kinship,
 fellows,
 With this underworld
 of Life;
 Let our hearts with love
 and sympathy
 Throb on and on
 forever
 To the music—rythmic music
 of the spheres eternal;
 And when our eyes
 are brim with tears
 Of sympathy
 and love,
 We shall have
 poetic fancy
 That this world's great heart
 is throbbing
 with our own;
 We shall have a feeling
 tender
 That we clasp its hand
 in ours.

Then, knowing we ourselves
 are of the human mass;

 No more our little vanities,
 our common, petty vanities,
 That ill become
 a little part
 of one Great Whole;
 That ill become
 so small a part
 of one Great Soul."

The picture faded
 and I saw another:
 'T was a woman;
 —small her face,
 her features pinched
 and pale and thin;
 her eyes near lusterless;
 A look she had
 of one whose life
 was all a weariness
 —a hopeless thing;
 And she to all the world
 was listless,
 As the world of her
 was thoughtless.
 She was one whose face
 seemed void of interest,
 But on second look
 one saw a gleam
 of deeper light
 beneath the surface;
 Then her face took on
 a greater meaning
 —meaning of a Soul.

'Twas in her home
and he who was a teacher
sought an entrance
at the humble door.
Surprised the woman was
until she saw
That he had come
on kindly errand bent
to greet one
in his service.
He was of the higher walks,
a teacher;
In the undertow of life was she
—a servant.
Modest was this home,
but he—the teacher—
spoke admiringly
of all he saw.
“It is my all
--this little home,”
the woman said,
—“For it, and God,
are all there is in life
for me.”
“But you have human ties”
he questioned;
“Yes,” the woman said,
then paused,
And o'er her face
all wrinkled, plain
and sallow,
Came a look of patience
with the pathos in it
of the Christ;
“These human ties ain't always
what they promise;

When you work upon
this tiny kettle,
You will make it bright
and shiny,
And you're sure
't will always answer you;
There's a greetin' here for me
when home I come;
'Tis more than I can say
for them I'm workin' for
and slavin';
Not that I am done
a tryin' for them,
Nor sha'n't be
so long's I'm livin',
But you've got to do
a somethin' always
that will give you rest;
There's somethin' soothin'
in the way that nickle's
shinin' on the stove,
—Somethin' soothin'
in the roses
on them curtains.
Life ain't brought *me*
much of comfort,
But I'm thankful
for the soap and water
and my muscle.
In the night,
when I must lie awake
and think,
I get to feelin' small
and good for nothin',

Then there comes to me
from somewhere, off, away,
a thought of God,
And somehow
I am comforted to know
I'm not alone
In what I've got to do
and bear."

And so in common life he found
both poetry and heroism
—More than one may find
sometimes in palaces.

Ah! there are heroines
who know it not,
Nor does the world remember
to record their names.

Nor does it matter
in the ending;
In the sunlight everlasting
of all time,

No man is great
nor woman,

For the hills
live on forever

And their shadows
fall upon their work,
And lo! their names
are all forgotten;

But out from all our lives
—the little and the big—
From out the patience
and the love, and charity,
Will grow for each
a Life with beauty
and a glory all its own.

—While the teacher
passed along the way,
He met a group of girls;
and noisily, unmaidenly,
they chattered
on the street.

By laughter loud and noisy talk
was jarred his sense
of womanhood

—Of delicacy and refinement
of true womanhood.

What to him was there
in them attractive
saving their—humanity?

What to them, he wondered,
was their life!

Was it some puzzle strange
—one that they
questioned not
nor understood?

But even in their chatter
found he answer
to his questioning:

Among them there was one
of light and springy step
Whose very presence
was a cheer to others.

She had pretty face
and graceful bearing,
And her air was self-reliant
as of one on none dependent.
Aye, a self-supporting woman
was this girl

—all that was she
and more;

At home she had
 an ailing mother,
Bed-confined
 the whole year through,
And this young girl
 was home provider,
And the only one
 for all!

Leaving baby at the nursery
 in the daytime,
She the whole day long
 would toil outside;
Her slender earnings
 were the pittance
That had kept them,
 fed them, clothed them.
Often had she toiled
 till midnight,
And at five o'clock
 in morning
She had risen
 that her mother
 Might have comforts
 for the day.
Nor complained
 this gentle maiden
 of her lot in life;
No self-pity
 cast its shadow
 on her buoyant spirit.
All the longings of her soul
 for bright things
 and the beautiful,
All higher needs
 of pleading heart,

Beneath the heavy
 iron heel of circumstance
 were these crushed out;
But silent was the girl
 and uncomplaining.

Again the teacher was in Class,
 and spoke of what he saw
 among the lowly:

“Not in battle,
 to the drum-beat,
 is all human striving;
Not in crowds, for only glory,
 find we all the heroes;
Nor is man the only hero;
 in the mother
 and the daughter
 is the fire heroic often,
And 'tis greater,
 aye, and grander,
When 'tis silent
 and pathetic,
In these heroines
 inglorious
 Whose exploits
 are not sung.

Much we hear
 of women sheltered
And by manly arms
 protected;
‘Save her,’ they oft tell us;
 ‘Let us save her
From the wintry blasts
 of toiling
 —for her bread;

All too fragile she,
 for coping
 In the world outside
 with man.'

So it is to please this fancy,
 —for this sentimental ideal—
 Men would shut her out
 from working
 —for her bread!

But it seemeth not in keeping
 with our progress
 and her need,

To say 'Nay'
 to her own toiling
 for her need of bread,

Her need for self
 or for the others
 that on her may be
 dependent!

Widened be her range,
 not narrowed;

Larger be her field
 for toiling,

If of choice,
 more scope it give her
 to provide herself
 with bread.

Is she handicapped
 by Nature

All too little
 for our liking,

That, as men,
 we would make harder

All the struggling
 she must do,

And from which
 we would not save her,
 Or in which
 we do but hinder?

Must we add
 to those of Nature
 other burdens for
 her bearing

That are heavy
 and more heavy;

And deny her right of having
 more of place and hope,
 and chances;

Less of comfort
 than her need is,
 less than is her right
 to claim;

Less than has
 the gentle woman
 thought of asking
 of the world?

Shall we,
 by our force and power,
 all she asketh
 still deny her?

Nay, my brothers,
 let us hasten,
 and concede to her
 (in reason)

Even more than she desireth
 in her modest sense of need,

Even more than she doth ask us
 in her modest sense of right!

In the lives of women,
 is the truest heroism.

What we call, in men, heroic
oft is noisy, loud, obtrusive,
claiming for itself
all praise;

But, in woman,
't is unconscious,
though sublime
and all pathetic;

And no thought of it has she,
whose habit is to drift.

When one braver, of her sex,
moves out alone,

Then only has she thought
of merit in her sacrifice
and daily toil.

Man it is forever ready
to accept that sacrifice;
His name for it is duty
—not a thing for praise
or wonder!

Yet there is
in lives of mothers,
More than in the
lives of men,
true heroism!

O our mothers!
O our mothers!

Only when the clod
has fallen
On that face the fairest,
sweetest,

Do we know
the fuller meaning
Of the subjugation rare
of self—that self
angelic!

O our mothers!
God forgive us!

God forgive
the sons of men
For their sins
against the mothers
—for ingratitude,
neglect.

Would I had
a devil's mirror—
One wherein each man
might see

All his weakness
and his meanness,
his conceit and selfish sin!

For the sake of one so lovely,
one so tender and so true,
He would ever yield to woman
all she asks
—aye, grant her more.

All for sake of her
who bore him,
All for her—the woman
—MOTHER.

—She who is (among all heroes)
of God's heroines
the QUEEN.

Now, again, the picture faded,
and again I saw
the Highway,
And that throng forever moving
—always moving on.

Again I heard the music
—music low and weird
and plaintive—

Music of that sad Refrain
that had burdened me
before.

And I said:

"Is Life the meaning
of this picture
strange and vivid,
Of this throng—this panorama
never ceasing in its moving
in the Highway—all along?

But, it seemed that,
if a journey,
Life was more
(though often less);

'T was a Race
and 't was a Battle,
And in every Race and Battle,
woman had a share
with man.

Yes, I saw that in the Battle
—even there
she must combat,
And not only with the woman
was her striving,
but with man!

She had there
a need to combat
For the rights of man
and woman
—For the rights of self
and others!

And I saw that in the Races
she competed,
And the prizes
of the Life-Course

Were not hers
except she won them
—she herself!

I saw that when she struggled
for her need
—(For her very bread,
it might be),

When she battled
for her rights
—(For her very life,
it might be),

She was weaker in her make-up,
in her armor, her equipment,
than her brother.

Then I saw that in her striving
in the Races
She was handicapped by Nature
and by custom
—Even more by art and fashion
than by Nature!

Then I wondered
of the fairness
—What the purpose
and the meaning
Of the struggling

and the striving,
Of the battling and competing
being harder for the woman
than for man!

Although I found no answer,
came the thought
that seemed all plain:

Nature's word
is not our saying,
And we may not change
the law;

It must be
 as Nature wills it
 —And we say
 that there is in it
 Purpose good
 and some large meaning;
 But no man
 for sake of fashion,
 Art or custom,
 or his pleasure,
 Has fair right
 to weaken woman,
 Handicap or halt
 her moving,
 Make her striving, struggling,
 harder,
 Make her tears more hot,
 more bitter,
 Make her path more thorns
 than roses,
 Make her suffer
 his unwisdom,
 Sacrifice her for his pleasure
 or his gain!
 Once more the farm-house
 came in view
 And there was sign
 of many guests
 and joyous greetings.
 All were there
 —the sons and daughters
 Relatives
 and friends invited.
 This the day that she
 —who to her heart

Had welcomed happy lover
 —she herself had named
 *To say “Good Bye”
 to her old home
 to her old world,
 And enter one all new
 and strange
 But full of promise
 of a life of bliss.
 Now I saw that she
 who of her will
 became a wife
 Was of them all
 the eldest
 And her name
 was—Rachel.
 And I saw
 that of her sisters
 One there was whose name
 was—Vashti.
 And I saw that she
 who stood beside the bride
 as maid
 Was sister of the bridegroom
 and her name was—Edith.
 Of the boys,
 the one who stayed at home
 was John;
 One, who had liking for the city
 greater than his love
 for country homestead
 —he was Albert.
 But to me the strangest
 of all else was this:

That she who had been
 leader of the girls
 who held the Scroll
 was—Vashti;
 And that Ruth, her sister,
 was of those who aided her
 —one of her following.
 Now I was glad
 when I saw Vashti,
 For to me was Vashti pleasing
 more than all the others,
 More than any I had seen
 before in all my days!
 On second thought 't is this
 and this alone
 That was the strangest far
 of all that I had seen
 this night
 —'T is this,
 that I thought Vashti
 of them all the best!
 Yet, why so strange?
 For she was beautiful
 of soul and face;
 And she was one
 who could be brave,
 who could be true;
 One who could love another
 well and dearly;
 Yet who never would forget
 herself
 (And this were well,
 for she herself was
 worthy of remembrance
 by all others
 —and herself).

Now they stood, and grouped
 in pretty fashion;
 Of them all the bride
 the center.
 He who wedded her
 was nearest,
 And he held her hand
 in his.
 Then when the man of God
 was ready to pronounce
 The words
 to bind what man
 may put asunder
 never,
 He—the bridegroom—
 to the maiden sang:
 O maiden fair,
 my love for thee
 Is like the surge
 of swelling sea,
 Nor time nor tide
 more changeless be
 Than is my love, fair maid,
 for thee,
 O maiden fair!
 Then all the younger men
 and maidens sang,
 As if in glad
 refrain:
 Than is his love,
 fair maid, to thee,
 O maiden fair!
 Again he sang—the lover—
 and they all responding
 as before:

O maiden fair,
 I come to thee
With heart unfettered,
 glad and free,
To take thy hand
 and ask of thee
Thy precious maiden love
 for me,
 O maiden fair!

O maiden fair,
 though it may be
Nor wealth nor fame
 I offer thee,
Full measure
 of felicity
My heart's deep love
 doth promise thee,
 O maiden fair!

Then sang the maidens
 standing near:
O maiden fair,
 we wish for thee.
A life of joy
 —from sorrow free,
That all thy days
 unclouded be—
This is our wish, sweet maid,
 for thee,
 O maiden fair!

Then, while the pastor
 spoke the words of binding
(Spoke in tender voice,
 as one solicitous
 for all the future
 of a child his own),

The lover sang, alone:
O maiden fair,
 I give to thee
This emblem
 of Eternity
And pledge for aye
 fidelity
To thee, O maiden fair,
 to thee,
 O maiden fair!
 O maiden fair!
To thee, my own,
 MY WIFE, to thee
I pledge life-long
 fidelity,
O woman fair, my wife,
 to thee,
 O woman fair!

And then the others sang,
 while he, now husband,
 took the kiss—his own:
To thee, O woman fair,
 to thee,
His pledge
 life-long fidelity,
O woman fair, and wife,
 to thee,
Fidelity life-long
 to thee,
O woman fair, and wife,
 to thee,
 O woman fair!

But, ere again I sought
 one other glance at Vashti,
 Vashti fair—so fair to me,

The picture faded
and I felt like one alone
and sorrowful;
And all the more
when to my ear came back
that same sweet,
sad Refrain.

Again I was in Class
—a woman was the teacher:
“Thoughts are things,”
she said,
“A creation of your spirit
is your thought.

’Tis force and power
—is thought
and ’tis eternal.

Of yourself your thought
is part;
And what you think to-day
is your new self.

You may wonder
but ’tis true
That what we *wear*
—our very clothes—
Absorb our thought
—our very thought.

Now if my cast-off thought
of time gone by
Has been of anger,
irritation or unrest,
My old-time clothes
my vicious thought absorbed,
And I that thought
may re-absorb.

Let men not seek companionship
with their dead selves;
Far better ’tis
to seek deliv’rance
from the body
of our death.

In all her moods
is Nature prodigal,
In casting off the old,
the lifeless;
—In bestowal on her creatures
of the fulness of new life:
The horns of deer drop off;
the serpent skins drop off:
The hairs of beast,
the feathers of the bird
drop off:

All fresh and new
as manna
from the hand of God
Are plumages and downy furs
and tints of flower.
Lilies of the field toil not,
nor do they spin.
Yet are arrayed
in beauty.

Shall man alone be unadorned,
shall he alone

Be undelivered
(in due time and season)
From the old, dead body
of his older self?

Nature will not wear
old clothes worn out;
Her birds build new their nests,
her flowers renew their youth;

MAN, who may toil and spin,
 and fashion wonders
 rare and beautiful,
 Has hint from lower life
 how he may be arrayed
 In all the glory
 of his *power creative*.
 Then, shall man
 drag through his life
 Down-loaded with the weight
 of years cast off?
 Shall man load down himself
 with garb of poverty,
 Of rags of thought
 —of old, dead life?
 Nay, poverty is not religion,
 nor monotony a virtue;
 If one teaches aught so ill
 it is not Nature;
 He who clothed the lily
 gave thee power
 to clothe thyself:
 The color of the lily
 is expression of its life;
 The dress of thine
 expression is (in part)
 of thine own larger life
 —thy spirit.
 Youth is newness
 in the spirit and in body;
 Youth is freshness, strength
 and growth;
 Youth is joyous, playful,
 and it revels
 in the joys of health,
 of hope, of Life.

Youth has love of dress,
 of color, music,
 beauty, pleasure,
 And it casteth out all fears,
 all doubt.
 And this is well
 —'t is intuition
 all unconscious.
 One may come to have
 no love for dress,
 May come to take no pride,
 no pleasure, in adornment.
 One may come to have
 no joy in life,
 And no delight
 in ways of youth
 —in living.
 One may say
 that youth has passed,
 With all its joys,
 its hopes, its pleasures,
 —gone forever.
 One may set his face
 out towards the setting sun
 And think of Life
 as sombre, sad,
 Of youth as fleeting,
 and to end in shadow
 —cheerless, hopeless.
 When 't is come to this,
 O man,
 'T is sign of waning,
 and thou art thyself
 inviting—death!
 If thou lose thy hope,
 thy faith,

If thou turn thy face
 unto the wall,
It will mean decay
 and death.
Such is not the choosing
 of the better way;
Thou may'st hold thy youth
and challenge all advancing
 of the years.
Will within thyself to rise
and thou shalt upward move
 and forward.
Now as to color:
Choose not black
 for robing;
It is badge of hopelessness
 of ending—death.
Aye, choose thee colors
that have warmth and light.
For emblem,
if it be for Life
(Or that thou callest death),
choose naught but white.
For thou indeed hast choice,
If so it be thy will
 to choose.
And more, if so it be
thy Spirit willeth,
Thou may'st have thy body
 fitly clothed.
Then will to have the right,
 the best,
Aye, will, and it shall come
 to thee.
Do thou demand it
in thy mind and strongly;

It will come to thee
 through asking,
It will come to thee
 by seeking,
Or by knocking
 at the opening door,
 and finding.
'Tis the law
that unto him that hath
 shall more be given;
But if one hath not,
from him shall taken be
 that which he hath.
Hold fast thine own,
 and thou shalt have
 and hold.
So think it not
 of little care,
 the body;
Thou may'st even love it
 as the dwelling
 of the Soul.
Think of it as temple
 for the spirit
 in it dwelling.
Shall it be neglected?
Rather shall it be
 kept beautiful
 and fitly clothed.
But only as thy soul within
 is beautiful
 will thy body be.
Only will thy body
be a fitting temple
when 'tis fitly kept
 and robbed.

Only as thou lovest life
 shall life be thine,
 or stay with thee;
 Therefore, be not careless,
 hopeless,
 in thy mind;
 For that were courting death,
 't were dying.
 Be not even slovenly
 in dress,
 For that itself
 is sign of dying,
 not of Life."
 Then she paused,
 and, after, said:
 "Now I would tell thee
 something more of dress.
 Note the dress
 of men you meet,—
 One may be dressed
 in manner foppish;
 Everything he wears
 proclaims aloud, and noisily,
 (as from the house-top)
 That with him
 the all in all
 is dress;
 It is his life,
 it is with him,
 the end and purpose all
 of life.
 One is dressed
 in slouchy manner;
 What he wears
 betokens chance.
 Be it this, or that, or other,
 — naught it matters;

Come, or go,
 't is wind, or weather;
 —This his thinking
 as to dress
 —It may be,
 as to his life the same.
 One must say
 that life and purpose
 are not dress;
 But the one of slouchy habit
 questions, by his dress;
 Is there purpose,
 is there even life,
 —is it not all chance;
 Is there plan or meaning
 in it all?
 If there be in Life a purpose;
 if there be in Life
 a meaning;
 It were seemly
 that one's dress
 Should speak of order,
 purpose, fitness.
 —Again, we see
 one dressed not slouchy,
 but all careless;
 And the manner of his wearing,
 more than what he wears,
 betokens mental habit.
 Life too purposeful to him
 (it seemeth)
 for much thought
 of dress;
 "Time is fleeting,
 work is pressing,
 let us to our tasks away.

Dress for comfort,
for enjoyment;
Dress for pleasure
—for thine own
and others.

Is there not of purpose,
and all worthy,
in so doing?

Much it seemeth so to be
to me.

—Let thy dress be suited
to thyself, thy person,
To thy work and to thy need,
and mood.

Let it be thy mood alway
that dress become thee,
That it be adapted

to thy personality,
To thy position,
and the place thou holdest.

What of Fashion?

She will have
her saying;
And, within the limits,
(bounds of reason,)
Thou may'st heed
her mandate;

For conspicuous
thou desirest not to be
—nor hast thou need.

Except at call of martyrdom,
(from which one prays
that he be spared.)

Who would, or need
defy that mandate?

Nay, to thy departure
from the crowd
Wouldst thou not fix
a limit?

Yea, thou needest not
to grovel with the herd;
Nor, like the hermit,
dwell alone;

Nor even with the wings
fly foolishly.

Give Fashion place,
but not control;
Thyself art Fashion,
if thou wilt;

For Fashion is the whole,
and of the whole
thou art some part;

So thou (in measure)
may'st thyself control
the fashion.

Fashion changeth?

Aye, and thou;
For thou art ever changing
and thyself becoming new;
For thou shalt newer be to-day
than yesterday;

And surely thou
shalt newer be to-day
Than was of yesterday
some other man or woman.

He was of the past
—a past now gone
and dead.

But thou art of the present,
of to-day
—the living present.

Shall the whole world
 change?
 —Shall old things pass away
 and all be new,
 Save that alone which is above,
 beyond all other things
 —save man himself
 or woman?
 More, shall all be changed
 —save that pertaining
 to the *woman* only?
 Shall it be her dress
 (and it alone)
 That shall be fixed,
 unchangeable,
 —And all the rest
 be new?
 This question comes
 with reason,
 For there are whose answer
 makes it fitting.
 This my answer:
 Of the rights (though few)
 of woman, in the past,
 One right was hers undoubted
 —hers conceded;
 (Nay, say men,
 't was more than right of hers
 —'t was weakness).
 It was right to *change*
 —the weakness
 to be fickle.
 Cramped, or bounded,
 tied, restricted,
 As to rights,
 or ways of working:

She could always
 changeful be, or fickle,
 as her mood had need.
 Her dress could be chameleon
 as her fancy pleased her.
 Now to bound, or bind,
 her fancy,
 Or to limit
 her desire,
 One thing only
 was there ever,
 And that one thing
 was that strange thing
 That we sometimes call
 Queen Fashion
 —She whose fiat
 was to woman
 Stronger far
 than rhyme or reason
 (as it seemed)!
 Now, if Fashion,
 and the fancy
 of the woman,
 Call for change
 (and change more striking
 than before)
 Who shall hinder,
 who deny her
 That which was
 her right conceded
 —Right to choose or change
 her garment,
 Right to choose
 a way of robing
 to her liking?

Sayest thou
 it must become her,
 her apparel?
 True, we answer,
 for a fashion unbecoming
 to her beauty
 —lovely woman!—
 Is a sin
 'gainst man and Nature.
 (Yet, it is a sin that woman
 hath committed
 —often, often;
 'Twas her Queen
 —the Queen called Fashion
 who compelled this sin,
 O woman!)
 But when man
 disliked a fashion,
 Only had he right
 of protest,
 And 't was ever
 right of woman
 (Right conceded,
 as I see it),
 To move on,
 in line with Fashion,
 Always at her own
 sweet will.
 Then the man
 had need of patience
 —patience only
 for a while:
 Not so long
 till to his liking
 she would come
 of her accord.

Aye, she would come,
 O charming woman!
 For she loves the man
 —does woman,
 And of her own will
 would please him,
 By her beauty,
 by her dress.
 But, one sayeth,
 lines of freedom
 for the woman
 are laid down;
 Wide though be
 her range of choosing
 —how to robe
 her form divine,
 Yet her dress must be
 not man's dress:
 She must stay
 within the lines
 Laid down by custom,
 and by Nature long ago!
 True, but man
 may be in error,
 If *he* draw the lines
 for *woman*,
 For her dress
 (or for aught else).
 For himself he had
 his choosing.
 And he chose
 to suit his need;
 Chose to suit his taste,
 his liking.
 Nor had woman
 aught to say!

Is the Law of Liberty
or the Perfect Law.

'But if woman—lovely woman,
choose to dress like man;
—How may we discern
between them
—How—Oh! how
—know—them—apart!

Well expressed,
by halting question,
is your horror
at the thought;

It is calamity most serious,
and its coming we may dread
As we may dread

the coming winter,
As the ague, or a fever,
as an avalanche, or cyclone,
epidemic, or a bore,
and the toothache,
As we dread the thing it is
—a revolution!

Yes, we dread
a thing so fearful,
That like man
shall be the woman,
And, (like babes
all mixed together,)
all identity be lost!

But, we wonder,
where is Nature
that she idly
stays her hand!

Has *she* naught to say
in protest?

Can she nothing do to hinder
this calamity so dreadful?

Where is *Man* himself,
we wonder,

Is there naught
within *his* power,
Such calamity of evil
to forbid?

Has it come (or is it coming),
that between
the man and woman

There is naught,
(nor will be ever,)
—naught to know
the two apart:

Naught that is
of Nature's doing,
Naught that is not

artificial,
—Nothing save some *tag*,
or covering
—Save some marking,
or the dress?

Nay, I know
we are too fearful
of her resource,
of her power;

And, until they
be exhausted
—All the resources
of Nature—
Needless will be
our alarm.

Much I fear, that half the evil
is not that the little woman

Is too much—too much
like man;
But that man,
more than he might be,
More than he has been
of old time,
Is himself, too much
—like woman!

Once there was
a badge of manhood
—Nature-given, striking,
flowing;
'T was man's pride,
his strength, his marking,
As a man among all men,
a man among all women.

When he took an oath
most solemn,
Always swore he
by this badge,
And indignity was greater
to this badge than to all else.
For this badge

has woman ever
had some liking
(more or less)
And the woman oft admires it,
—even loves it,
(as her own).
But her liking, and her loving,
is in seeing it
in place;

It would fill her soul
with horror,
If it grew
on her own face!

It may nestle there
(a season),
She may claim it
as her own,
But to have this badge
by growing,
And to be enforced
to wear it

—This would be
her pet aversion!

In this realm
—this realm his own,
Man has always from intrusion
by all women
been secure;
And the future has no danger
in this right
—man's right alone,

Woman sweet
no beard is growing!

—She for it has shown
no liking;

Yet has man
by constant shaving,
Sought to lose his pride,
his birthright;
Sought to rob himself
(the master)
of this badge
of his distinction;
Sold it for some
mess of pottage
—pottage of some
passing fancy;
Lost it to some freak
of Fashion;

—That he might
 (in shameless habit)
 Have a face all smooth
 like woman's!
 Nor has woman
 e'er protested;
 Though it were
 well in her right,
 To object to man's intrusion
 on her own domain,
 Her domain
 by right of Nature!
 If unforced,
 and for no reason,
 (For no reason
 that we know,)
 Man his badge
 has thus discarded,
 'Tis his doing,
 and his only,
 'T was no fault
 of lovely woman
 If man lack some mark
 of Nature,
 If he doff some trait
 she gave him,
 And there be no sign
 to show him
 To be man
 (and not a woman);
 'Tis his right a tag to carry
 that may save him
 from the hardship,
 From the ridicule, or folly,
 misery, contempt,
 (or shaming,)

Of his being sometimes taken
 for a—woman!
 And we women
 all are willing
 That he have one
 —one to suit his whim,
 or fancy.
 Let it be a string, or garment,
 or a color, all his own;
 Let him have
 an ear or nose ring,
 Or a cape, or cloak, or knee-cap,
 or a baby's rattle.
 His the choice
 and his the comfort,
 Give the boy
 his needed pleasure.
 —If he cannot
 make his hair grow
 Where, in ages past,
 it grew,
 When the man
 in pride and power
 By his beard
 did all his swearing,
 (And the man, in all the ages
 did the swearing
 for the race,)
 He, perhaps,
 may grow still *bald*,
 And by *all* his hair
 off-shaving,
 So unlike be
 to the woman
 That we'll know
 when we shall see

Her Crown of Glory
 on her head,
 —That we'll know
 by all things lovely
 —lovely and of
 good report,
 That she is a woman only
 —*nothing like a man at all!*
 Then we'll know
 whene'er a being
 With no glory crown at all
 comes within the range
 of vision.
 That a man it is
 —not woman,
 Or a thing,
 for lack of wording
 —Lack of any better naming,
 we may call—a man!
 It were well,
 so say we ever,
 That between the man
 and woman
 There shall be a range
 of difference
 As by Nature
 't was intended;
 But, we ask,
 in honest question,
 Is it not the will of Nature
 that this difference
 be in *person*
 —not in *dress*?
 If the range be all too narrow
 for the need of man
 or woman,

Can it be because of woman
 having made advance
 inhuman,
 —Far beyond the lesser progress
 made by man?
 Has the inconsiderate woman
 so been narrowing
 between them
 The wide range
 erstwhile existing
 That his manhood's pride
 is hurt?
 If this be the evil pending,
 what the cure
 —in what the ending?
 Shail we stay
 the woman's progress
 —stay it short of her desire,
 That the man
 may stop advancing
 —Stop far short
 of his own power?
 Nay, a better way is open
 —one more seemly,
 fair and just:
 Let them both
 —the man and woman—
 Have free course
 —full right of moving;
 Let them each and both
 make progress,
 Full within their powers
 and need.
 Let no need of one alone,
 (and far more
 no need imagined,)

And she by all
 was called a queen
 her name, Queen Fashion.
 All who passed
 in turn before her
 she would closely scan,
 And she would smile
 on them who pleased her,
 And on others
 she would frown.
 There was something
 in her smile
 That caused a thrill
 of happiness
 in those who won it;
 But her frown, it seemed,
 made sorrowful all hearts
 Far more than her rare smile
 made glad.
 And Fashion
 was a fickle queen,
 For she would frown to-day
 on something she erstwhile
 had smiled upon,
 And smile on what erstwhile
 she frowned upon!
 Now, all, or nearly all,
 of men and women
 (more the women)
 Were the willing slaves
 of Fashion;
 And to win her smile,
 (so sweet it was,)
 Or miss her frown,
 (a frown severe and hurting,)

These her subjects
 made all willing sacrifice.
 Some there were (it seemed)
 who had no other purpose,
 Found in life
 no other pleasure,
 Than the happiness
 of winning
 From their Queen
 her sunny smile
 —Her frown avoiding
 (but they were the few).
 Only glimpses had I
 of the scenes
 (as of a play in progress).
 At the first, the women
 dressed in roomy skirts;
 And when they danced
 they were as tops inverted,
 Gliding, spinning,
 o'er the surface of the floor.
 All outspread and flaring,
 was the bottom of the skirt,
 As if a hoop, or wheel,
 were hidden
 in the lower, nether folds,
 Environing the dress within
 —the dress within
 and wearer.
 Came there then upon the scene
 first one, and then another,
 Having doffed the roomy skirts,
 and donned
 for other robing,
 Dress all clinging
 to their forms

*You had, I know,
 a wealth of witchery,
 But men retreated
 as you forward stepped,
 For there was that about you
 that forbade
 Familiar greet
 —so they their distance kept.
 And yet I would not
 call you back again
 Through these dim years,
 though sweet 't would be
 I ween;
 I would not tempt you
 tread our sphere again,
 All-filling, widening,
 spinning Lady Crinoline.*

Now in this Comedy I saw
 that men were riding
 on a wheel;
 (But other pattern was it
 than the wheels
 whereon the girls
 had ridden
 When they carried
 in their hands
 the Scroll).
 Wide and high
 the forward wheel
 and small the other;
 And it seemed
 that wondrous skill
 was needed
 Lest the wheeler fall,
 and from a dizzy height
 of danger!

And I saw that,
 finding danger in the skirting
 of the leggings,
 Some were dressed
 in older fashion,
 Where the leggings
 always ended at the knees,
 And joining there
 with tops of stockings.
 Now I saw that Fashion
 had not smiled
 On innovation
 such as this,
 And wearers were derided
 —often hooted
 on the street;
 Till, at last, the Queen relented
 and the men had chance
 thereafter
 —Chance to wear
 the safer garments,
 At their will
 and unmolested.
 Then I saw
 the wheel was changed
 And saw the woman
 mounting it,
 And finding in its running
 much of pleasure,
 much of joy.
 Nor wondered I to see it,
 for it seemed
 a useful pleasure
 —Aye, a tempting sport
 and glorious.

Now the Queen
 was loath to smile
 Upon this wheeling
 by the woman;
 But ere long she yielded
 gracefully,
 And made the sport
 her own—
 (For this
 was Fashion's way of doing
 —fickle Fashion).
 Then a danger
 seemed to threaten;
 For the skirts
 of woman's wearing
 Were entangled oft in riding,
 and the gentle rider thrown;
 (For the danger to the skirting
 of the leggings
 of the man,
 Was as naught
 to woman's danger
 in the skirting
 of her gown).
 Then I saw that woman
 wondered
 Why *she* could not doff
 the skirting,
 As the man had done
 before her,
 To avoid her greater danger
 in her wider-skirting dress.
 And her wondering
 and her thinking
 led her out at last,
 to doing,

And, lo! emerged the woman
 as I saw her, in my Vision
 —on the wheel!
 Now glad was I in seeing
 all this striking innovation;
 For I thought
 the knell was sounded
 now forever for the wheel;
 —Not the wheel
 that she was riding,
 Without skirt,
 or flowing flounces,
 But the one she'd worn
 in flounces
 —One which swept the floor
 and pavement,
 Or the wheel, or hoop,
 called "crinoline!"
 —But I saw
 the Queen was frowning,
 And of women,
 some were pouting,
 While the men (and boys)
 were hooting
 At this newest change
 of Fashion,
 And they called it
 innovation;
 As if change of fashion always
 (crinoline to closer skirting)
 were not startling
 innovations
 —Be they good, or be they ill,
 at the time
 the women make them
 (or the men).

But I saw the fashion gaining;
 and the Queen disposed
 to smiling,
 And I knew that soon
 her frowning
 Would at skirts be
 as of yore;
 And I wondered
 (how I wondered!)
 —When the time would come
 for changing
 Back from leggings
 to wide dresses,
 Would the men and boys
 (and women)
 Think the innovation
 startling
 (—Or, at least,
 so very startling
 As it was from gowns
 to leggings)?
 Then I saw a home,
 and in it were two girls
 —two daughters
 of the household.
 Entered now the father,
 smiling;
 And he noted
 how the girls were robed,
 And o'er his face
 there came a look,
 of pained surprise.
 “Nay, girlies mine,”
 he said.
 “It is not fitting
 —such a dress as this.

Nor is it pleasing
 to your father,
 And he loves you
 best of all.
 Now, tell me,
 is it proper?”
 While he spoke,
 one forward came
 And playfully
 in girlish manner,
 Placed her hand
 upon her father's lips,
 And made a laughing protest
 'gainst his speech:
 “Now, not a word,
 this father mine,
 —For know you not
 that Fashion orders it
 —Society demands it.
 —’Tis full dress,
 you dear old sweetheart.”
 Jokingly he answered her:
 “Full dress, indeed!
 It is not full, at all;
 And, yet,
 ’t is more than full;
 ’Tis like the paradox of Life
 —It is, and yet ’tis not!
 ’Tis more than full
 at bottom,
 But at top
 ’t is more than less than full;
 ’t is even more than scant
 —There’s not enough
 to weigh it even
 in the balance,

To weigh to prove it
 wanting altogether!"
 Now they joined in laughter,
 for affection reigned
 among them;
 And love was deep
 and tender
 In the father,
 whom the girls adored.
 —The father, playful,
 touched a button,
 calling in a servant:
 "Bring a broom!"
 he said, in boyish glee,
 And, in mock earnestness,
 he swept the floor
 while saying,
 "If you wear this train,
 then I must go before
 and sweep the way
 Across the porch
 and all along the street,
 Lest in its folds
 there gather up all sorts
 Of dire reminders
 of the gay bacteria!"
 The daughter stayed his hand
 and said:
 "Nay, Father Antics,
 —need of sweeping
 there is none,
 For, see, I gather up the folds
 like this,
 And carry all the train
 —not even touching
 floor or ground at all!"

It chanced the other daughter
 thought her of the messenger
 who brought the gowns
 —Who had been waiting
 for some word
 of commendation
 Of the fitting
 of the garments;
 And she summoned hastily
 this messenger.
 The one who entered
 was a maid
 Of stature small,
 but years mature;
 Her face was thin,
 her eyes were sad,
 And her apparel
 scant, and worn, and soiled.
 On seeing her
 the father of the girls
 felt sore at heart,
 And picking up
 a pair of shears,
 That lay within a basket
 holding woman's work,
 In mood more serious
 he quickly clipped a border
 From the hanging trail
 of his fair daughter's dress,
 And threw it o'er the shoulders
 of the waiting maid,
 Who, in astonishment,
 could make no protest.
 "This will keep you warm,"
 he said,

"And you may,
 at your own convenience,
 make yourself a gown;
 And while you're wearing it,
 remember well the lesson
 that it teaches
 —Waste and Want
 are twins.
 And now, my own dear girl,"
 he further said,
 "There's still enough to spare,
 in this one dress,
 To shear away
 and make a cape
 To cover your fair shoulders
 —in a way becoming girls
 so pure and sweet
 As are these daughters mine,
 my children."
 While he was speaking,
 one had entered
 —'t was the mother.
 "Don't be foolish, dear,"
 she said;
 "We all must heed
 Queen Fashion;
 On the dress
 that pleases *you* the best
 she frowns!
 Now Fashion
 has a way her own
 And she *will* have it,
 do we what we may
 to hinder!"
 "May be father's right,
 dear mother,"

Said the girls,
 "and Fashion may be wrong,
 though she be Queen!
 There's something better, too,
 than Fashion's smile."
 "—And something worse
 than love of father
 And this dear, sweet mother,"
 said the man,
 And then he kissed the mother
 and the daughters, lovingly.
 And now I saw
 the maid depart.
 Along the street
 she made her way
 Until she stopped
 at sound of music.
 Out from palace building
 there was melody,
 And sound of keeping time to it
 by tripping feet of dancers.
 Then the maid,
 with train of dress
 still on her shoulders,
 (Making contrast sharp
 with soiled old dress,)
 stayed, listening,
 And drinking in the melody
 of strains so heavenly to her
 But this I noticed:
 Only in her heart
 did *she* keep time
 to music;
 For her body tired,
 and wearied limbs,
 and sore-chafed feet,

No impulse had
 to beat the time
 Upon the smooth but stony
 pavement.
 —This I saw,
 and, grieved at heart,
 I heard again
 that strange and sad Refrain
 —then lost the Vision!
 Now I saw a sandy beach,
 and on it gathered there
 A motley group
 of men and women,
 lads and lasses.
 They were playing noisily,
 all chatting, chaffing,
 laughing, shouting.
 They were dressed
 in costume varied;
 Only in one way alike
 —their costumes—
 'T was in this,
 that all their dress
 was scant and thin;
 For there was
 naught superfluous
 in dress of any;
 Not enough to cover nakedness
 in dress of many.
 There was naught
 to serve as ballast
 —needless ballast;
 Only when 't would help
 to float the body,
 Was there more abundance
 (as the larger sleeves).

Naught I thought
 of this scant dress;
 For everything seemed
 wholesome, funful,
 and for good and pleasure.
 All suggestion was
 of healthful exercising,
 The delight of friendship
 and companionship,
 forbidding thoughts of ill.
 But Fashion had her place
 —near by and on her throne
 And smiling—always sweetly—
 on her votaries
 (for such they were).
 But now I saw
 a thing most strange:
 Along the line
 of Fashion's vision,
 (As she gazed
 direct before her,)
 And parallel
 with line of shore,
 There seemed a line invisible,
 and when the bathers
 crossed the line,
 I saw that Fashion frowned,
 and quickly they, the bathers,
 would return as if ashamed.
 (It was as in the days of old
 —it seemed—
 When eyes of the first pair
 were opened,
 And they knew
 that they were naked.)

Standing by,
 (not bathing,)
 Others were there, watching
 all the fun and frolic,
 And the antics
 of the bathers.
 These would seem to think it
 naught of ill to see
 the naked limbs
 —While bathers
 were within the lines.
 But if it chanced
 that any stood without
 that magic line,
 And saw a bather
 on that outer side,
 They seemed disturbed
 in spirit,
 sore dismayed—
 (As if in sympathy
 with Fashion,
 Looking on
 and frowning).
 Now I saw that one
 who was a looker-on
 Was chatting with a bather,
 when it chanced
 (By accident, it seemed,)
 they crossed the line
 together.
 He who was not bathing,
 (nor was dressed
 as were the bathers,)
 was affected
 In a moment after crossing,
 by the other's dress

—Was stricken
 with some malady, it seemed,
 And fell all prone
 upon the ground
 —And then I saw that he was
 in a faint!
 Then rose a cry
 of fright—alarm,
 And back, across the line,
 the bather hurried
 —shamed, repentant.
 He who fainted, swift was borne
 —upon a stretcher—
 to the Queen,
 Who sweetly smiled upon him
 (as if praising him
 for loyalty to her
 —the Queen).
 He soon recovered
 —nothing worse for falling
 —When he passed from sight
 upon his way.
 Then I was told
 there was no other remedy
 For this strange malady
 than Fashion's smile
 (Although I wondered
 if the malady itself
 were not a fashion only!)
 Now there came upon the scene
 two maidens,
 swiftly wheeling;
 They dismounted for a moment,
 joining lookers-on
 Who were in numbers
 on the beach.

But such commotion followed
 that the maidens
 soon were troubled
 in their minds,
 And were by others
 caused annoyance.
 Now I saw it was their dress
 that made commotion;
 Though I wondered
 at the strangeness of it;
 They were dressed in manner
 suited to the wheeling
 (not the bathing).
 Bifurcated the garments
 of the girls,
 But neatly fitting
 were they clothed.
 Their manner was of those
 who gentle are
 and modest;
 And well covered, hidden,
 were their forms;
 —From sole of foot
 to closely covered neck
 was there no nakedness
 upon them.
 Of bathers, who themselves
 were bare below the ankle,
 (Aye, and some below the knee,
 and many bare
 Beyond the lines conventional
 for even bathers
 in the water;)
 —Now, there were of these
 who curious were

About the dress
 worn by the wheelers,
 And they scanned the maidens
 closely (and offensively)
 With look of being shocked
 beyond expression.
 These made protest
 by their manner,
 (some by words;)
 And there were boys,
 (themselves more bare
 than were the others,)
 —Boys who came behind
 the maiden visitors,
 And, throwing sand upon them,
 ordered them to "Scat;"
 Whereat I saw they scatted
 with alacrity,
 And (sore disturbed in feeling)
 soon were lost to view
 By swiftly wheeling
 on their way.
 Anon there came two maidens
 who were wheeling;
 And their dress was like the one
 worn by the maidens
 driven off before,
 By jeer and gibe
 of sportive bathers.
 These were greeted
 in like manner
 to the other wheelers,
 Yet did they but little heed
 or seem to fear
 The frowns of Fashion
 or the jeers of others.

While standing for a moment
 near the throng,
They gazed upon the others
 with an air of mild disdain,
Then hied them quick to cover
 near at hand,
Where bathers
 full convenience had
 for making change of robing.
Here the maids threw off
 their outer dress,
And, in a twinkling, lo! emerged,
 and robed as was
 the throng of bathers,
Bare of feet and ankles,
 and above;
And bare
 of arms and neck,
In splendid form
 and radiant maiden beauty.
Quickly they appeared,
 a picture full inspiring;
And, well greeted, with a smile
 by Fashion.
With the smiles and cheers
 of bathers,
Plunged they then
 far in the waters
 all inviting,
Helping thus to swell
 the noisy fun
 and frolic.
Now, it chanced, two girls
 in bathing costume,
In some spirit of adventure,
 mirthful, wanton.

Saw the wheels unused,
 and, springing on them,
Wheeled across
 that line invisible.
This seeing, Fashion frowned
 and even stamped her feet,
 in marked displeasure
Now this action of the maidens
 seemed as if it were a crime,
 and dreadful;
Though to me
 it was all blameless,
Like the harmless play
 of kittens.
For a time
 they braved the furor,
 but at last they winced
Before the swell
 of mighty indignation
 at such dreadful innovation
As infraction of the laws
 of Fashion,
 and before her very eyes!
Back across the line
 they hurried,
But in very act of crossing
 they both tumbled,
 ere dismounting.
As if to the din and protest
 of the people
 and their Queen!
Now two other maidens,
 mirthful,
Hastened to the place
 of robing,

And there donned
 the dress for wheeling
 Over their own suits
 for bathing,
 And returned
 to mount their wheels.
 These in their turn
 were hooted,
 But by some, not all
 the people,
 For many now
 were laughing
 At the humor
 of the play.
 But the thing
 the most surprising
 Was the doing of Queen Fashion;
 for she joined
 the ones hilarious,
 And now smiled
 upon the maidens!
 When the jeering ones
 saw Fashion
 Was not frowning,
 but was smiling,
 They desisted in their protests
 and no more
 the girls were hindered
 In their wheeling
 at their pleasure!
 For they knew,
 (but had forgotten,)
 That the laws
 enforced by Fashion,
 Are but laws conventional,
 not as of Medes and Persians
 all unchangeable.

Now I saw the Queen
 was curious
 And became full interested
 in the style,
 or in the pattern,
 Of the dress
 worn by the wheelers!
 Then in her will majestic
 she commanded
 their attendance
 at her side.
 This gave the cue to others
 and the throng,
 no longer laughing,
 Ceased to make
 a further protest,
 And they turned to a discussion
 of the merits of the dress
 —its merits and its faults
 “The dress is not unpleasing,”
 said Queen Fashion,
 now most gracious;
 “Let it have its place
 hereafter;
 —You may wear it
 when ’t is fitting
 to your need.”
 “Aha,” one said, soon after,
 and aside,
 “Its place will be one larger
 than Queen Fashion
 now conceives;
 For where the place not fitting
 to its need,
 If it be in the temper
 of Queen Fashion

That the dress
 be worn at all?"
 "And it will be
 still more pleasing,"
 said another,
 "As our minds to it are customed
 in the wearing.
 The human form,
 that is ideal
 —A never-varying standard,
 peerless in its beauty—
 This, a thing of grace
 and loveliness,
 So has been hidden
 under woful shapes
 of Fashion
 That it is the thing to which
 we least are customed;
 So it is we leave
 the inner circle
 of perfection,
 And we flounder
 on the outskirts
 in grotesque incertitude,
 With ne'er a resting place
 for sole of foot
 of any winged ideal.
 So it is we hug
 as our ideals
 the pets of Fashion,
 Vain illusions,
 of the nightmare order,
 And anachronistic freaks
 ephemeral."
 "'Tis true," another said,
 "and always it is so.

The new and strange
 is not so pleasing
 to our senses
 As the old
 and more familiar.
 What we love the best,
 and has our tenderest care,
 is the oldest of association.
 We love old songs
 the best;
 The obsolete
 is most romantic,
 And only that is classic
 which is of the older days.
 We like the new,
 the old we love.
 The things of yesterday outre,
 are on the morrow
 in good form.
 --Methinks the dress
 has come to stay."
 Whereat the boys
 who threw the sand
 upon the girls,
 Now threw it high in air
 and shouted, "Hip, hurra,"
 and full content.
 And now, among the bathers,
 saw I one—a maiden.
 modest, beautiful,
 And she was clothed in manner
 more regardful of proprieties
 than others were.
 Among the men was one
 who sought to flirt
 with this fair maiden;

But she liked him not,
 and she repelled
 all his advances.
 His appareling was
 scantiest of them all;
 And he was bolder in his manner
 than were others.
 While I gazed upon this scene,
 it passed away,
 And I was in an office
 in a city.
 She who was most modest
 at the seashore,
 Sat there, in this office,
 at a table, writing.
 She was dressed in skirts;
 but short,
 As they are worn
 by girls who ride the wheel.
 And now I saw
 that he who was so bold
 when bathing,
 Who had liking for flirtation,
 who had dressed
 in shameless fashion,
 —Now I saw
 that he came forward
 And he made sharp protest
 'gainst the wearing
 in *his* office
 Of a dress
 like that worn by the maiden;
 —of such dress immodest
 —One that shocked
 susceptibilities so tender
 as his own!

And if she hoped
 to hold employment there,
 She must appear no more
 in robing like her own
 that day!
 And now he passed
 without the door,
 And she who
 had been harshly censured,
 fell to weeping;
 When there came to her
 another maiden,
 (One who had been sitting near,)
 who brought sweet sympathy
 in words and tears.
 And in their talk together,
 soon I learned
 How often, often,
 had they come —these girls—
 With skirts all draggled,
 by the rain and slush
 of dirty street,
 All wet for inches
 from the bottom up!
 And with these garments
 wet about their feet,
 Would these sweet maidens
 sit the long hours through,
 and suffer
 from the dampness.
 When it chanced to be
 the turn of sacrifice
 That woman pays
 for motherhood,
 (That man has right
 to safeguard and to honor

And that well demands
 the chivalry most loyal
 of the truest manhood,)

—When this chanced to be,
 there danger was
 Of suffering
 for these maidens fair,
 and long-continued.

While I mused, and thought
 that modesty of man,
 so-called,
 May be a cloak
 for something worse
 than ignorance,
 this picture also faded.

Nor was it all a comedy
 —this play of contrast,
 Progress:

For I saw such tragedy
 as is in Life
 —In all of Life
 —its comedies and dramas.

Now with the changing
 of the dress,
 Was change
 of occupation.

First, the woman wrought
 in dwellings—
 (as at service),
 Even toiled she in the fields
 among the waving grain
 —Was hewing wood
 and drawing water
 for the man.

Like a slave of man was woman,
 and it seemed

That it had always been
 that woman thus had toiled.

For long and hard
 was woman's working,
 And from morn till night,
 and in the night itself,
 Until the morning's light
 would break upon her doing,
 Bringing day, but more of toil
 —not rest.

I saw that woman,
 when in service,
 Oft did suffer many things
 that hurt her pride;
 No recognition would she have
 that she was--woman.

She would sleep in corners
 —room in garrets;
 She would eat of scraps,
 and have no change
 Beyond horizon
 of a dooryard.

She would tire
 of all the slow monotony
 Of grind,
 and ill-requited labor:

As of one without
 the very circle of her moving
 —Without in all the life
 and purpose of it
 —Within for needs alone
 of holding body, soul
 together:

Within to play the role
 of holding bodies, souls
 together,

Of the *others* whom she served
 —of those more favored.
 Now I saw her
 seeking other service
 than the daily grind
 —The grind of
 hopeless monotone
 of scant existence.
 First, she sought
 the factories,
 And she found some happiness
 in shorter hours of toil,
 and freer ways of living.
 Aye, and even seemed it
 that she rose degrees
 in social status
 in her laboring!
 And, so encouraged,
 other fields she entered!
 —School and office
 and the shop,
 And medicine and law
 and pulpit;
 Till at last (it seemed)
 there were no doors
 That had been open
 to her brother
 That she feared
 to knock upon.
 And, when
 in her own quiet way
 She knocked for entrance
 into newer rooms,
 There were no doors
 that opened not
 at her persistence.

Then I saw her writing books,
 and printing, sketching,
 painting, teaching,
 —All in ready willingness
 and skill,
 And happy in her newer sphere
 of independence
 All unknown to her of old
 (and to her mothers,
 of the centuries gone).
 Nor did she lose
 the graces of her sex,
 In changes rapid
 like to these;
 But out from all these phases
 of her doing
 —From out the shop,
 the factory, school
 and office
 Gladly did she go
 and enter
 Woman's greater,
 grander sphere
 —the Home
 —The sphere she loves
 e'en better than them all
 —The sphere of wifely joys,
 of mother cares
 —the sphere
 of LOVE.

The Comedy was ended;
 I was in a city
 —on the street.
 I saw a half-closed open door;
 'twas closed from sight
 —not entrance,

For 't was open to all comers,
 had they money and desire.
 It had an air solicitant
 far more than air inviting.
 Standing there
 in lounging postures,
 (Of the atmosphere about them
 all unmindful.)
 There was group
 of idle people.
 In the hand or in the mouth
 they had cigar or cigarette
 —In their eyes was smoke,
 in nostrils, fumes of liquor.
 Air they had forbidding
 and repellent.
 Some were gross,
 and some were lawless,
 all of them ill-bred;
 And coarsely eyeing,
 boldly staring,
 Or were ogling,
 all the passers-by.
 Idle loungers—common loafers—
 were they;
 And as careless of themselves
 as reckless of the rights
 of others.
 Comment made they,
 at their fancy.
 On the people
 passing near them:
 —On their dress, their walk,
 their manner,
 or their seeming errand.

With these fellows
 —rude and reckless—
 There was naught
 in any manner
 sacred in its privacy.
 When the subject
 of their laughing,
 Of their scoffing,
 chaffing, sporting,
 Heard their comments,
 loudly spoken,
 Naught cared they,
 the vampires, vipers,
 They the vagabonds,
 the villains.
 Were they not
 freebooters social,
 —Traitors to all
 kindly ties?
 Spared they none
 —not even women?
 Nay, for more than man
 was woman
 Made their mark,
 was made their target.
 She, less callous than the others
 —she who keener feels
 the stings,
 In her inner self
 more sensitive, more modest,
 More alive to coarse allusion,
 lustful glance,
 For her it was they had in store
 when passing,
 All the shafts of ridicule,
 most stinging.

If there was of manliness
 in all this group of idlers,
 loafers,
 It was in abeyance,
 it was dormant, latent,
 —There was none
 in evidence.
 Not so strange this picture;
 I had seen it often, often,
 And I ask
 who has not seen it,
 Seen it daily,
 in the cities, in the towns
 and in the country?
 And the answer
 —you may hold it,
 if you will,
 Aye, lest it shame us
 —shame our ethics,
 Shame our progress,
 shame our laws,
 and our religion.
 While I watched
 this group of idlers,
 One there came
 along the way,
 Who had helped
 unroll the Scroll.
 (She was wheeling
 as before.)
 Naught saw I in all her manner,
 or her dress,
 unpleasing;
 To mine eyes,
 and to my senses,

She was innocence
 and sweetness,
 grace and beauty.
 If there aught were
 in her manner or her dress,
 unusual,
 It were nothing more
 than novelty;
 —But novelty
 is not a crime.
 With a movement rapid,
 graceful,
 Came this girl
 —a lovely vision.
 As she neared
 the group of idlers
 She had cause
 to stay her motion
 and dismount.
 Now I saw that it was she
 who at the wedding
 of her brother
 Stood beside the bride,
 it was the sister
 of the one so beautiful
 —Most beautiful of all to me
 —my Vashti;
 Aye, I saw
 that it was Edith.
 Quickly, with malicious folly,
 one who blear-eyed was
 and drunken,
 Called aloud,
 in halting hiccough:
 “Shame—(hic)—shame
 upon her!”

And there were
 among these idlers
 Some who were
 (in manner seeming)
 Not ill-bred,
 and not ungentle,
 Who the thought
 of this brute drunken,
 echoed—laughing!
 Colored then her face,
 as crimson,
 Did the face of this
 fair maiden;
 And no longer staying, waiting
 for the purpose
 of her halting,
 She moved on
 but now was walking
 Out of reach,
 and sight, and hearing,
 of the objects of offense!
 No retort she made
 —no answer.
 Not within her right,
 it seemeth,
 to make answer.
 It was in her right, it seemeth,
 but to suffer, and—move on;
 —That was her full right
 —as woman,
 But 't was all her right,
 it seemeth!
 Strange the laws,
 and strange the customs,
 That the right is mine
 to trespass;

And her right is but to suffer;
 —other right not hers
 —the woman's!
 Were I she,
 I would take chances,
 if I could, on Mars;
 There, mayhap,
 they do things better
 —naught could they
 do worse.
 Now, in passing,
 swiftly wheeling,
 There was one who heard
 and saw it
 —Saw the scene that I
 had witnessed;
 Then he stopped,
 and, lightly springing,
 stood before us.
 “Yours the shame,”
 he cried out, hotly,
 “And 't is more than shame
 in you;
 Foul your breath,
 and air-polluting,
 —All too foul for saying shame
 to one so pure
 —so pure and lovely
 —As we see
 in you fair wheeler.
 'T is no shame for doing only
 what is good in her own eyes;
 what is full within her right!
 Say you shame,
 aye, you who know not
 half the meaning
 of the word?

When you say it, you shame only
 her who bore you
 —your own mother!"
 He was young who spoke
 —just merging into manhood:
 Clear his eye,
 his hand was steady
 Warm his heart,
 and pure his thought.
 Type was he of rarest manhood,
 and I loved him
 For his graces,
 for his courage,
 And his championship
 of girlhood
 —Championship of one
 deserving,
 One so lovely and well worthy
 of protection
 Close he stood beside his wheel;
 within one hand
 the handle bar,
 With one hand lightly,
 on the saddle
 —resting lovingly upon it.
 As a thing of life and breathing,
 as a man his steed caressing,
 Were the two
 —the steed and rider.
 And he stood
 as one dismounted
 for a moment only.
 As one ready
 at the word of speeding,
 To be off and fleeting
 out of sight.

"Right, my boy,"
 said one much older
 —One who heard it all
 while passing.
 He was one whose hair
 was graying,
 Not as once so strong his arm,
 but his eye was clear
 and kindly,
 Steady was his voice
 and bearing;
 "Right my boy,
 there's something cheering
 in such manliness as yours;
 When you shall take the helm,
 the best of us may go.
 We older are, and of the past,
 and soon we must go hence:
 The man who comes
 is new,
 And I would see him worthy
 of the woman new
 (If she be all
 the other ask of her).
 If you are he,
 (or he be such as you,)
 we welcome him.
 The times have changed,
 the fashions, too,
 have changed;
 But fashions of our day
 are not so free from fault
 That they deserve
 perpetuation.
 We ourselves
 oft changed the fashions,

At our pleasure,
 at our will:
 Oft to suit our needs,
 our fancies, or our whims.
 And shall we say
 to those now coming
 —Those who come
 to take our places:
 When you take in hand
 the vessel,
 You must ever trim the sails
 as they were trimmed before?
 Naught it matters
 what the need of sailors,
 Need of wind,
 or need of weather,
 Or the purpose
 of their sailing,
 As they find the sails,
 (or always as we left them,)
 shall they trim them!
 Shall we ask
 of their young blood
 such folly?
 Nay, I say, to their own liking
 be their sailing,
 And, my sailors,
 —men and women—
 Let me tell you,
 not too well your sailing,
 If it be not better
 than of old.
 Little did we in our past
 to give us pride:
 And less that we may urge
 for your repeating!

—Naught that we
 may force on you as model."
 "Rebuked am I,"
 said he of ruddy nose,
 half sobered;
 "—Boy, forgive me
 —here's my hand,
 And give me yours,
 young fellow
 Better far in other care, my boy,
 in care of manly men,
 like you,
 Than in the hands of men,
 like me
 (Who are not men),
 is woman.
 Boy, forgive me,
 for her sake—my mother,
 and for her—the maiden,
 —Yes, for her who had no need
 for shame."
 Whereat the boy,
 with glowing face,
 Clasped hands with him,
 now nearly sobered;
 Whereupon the motley group
 dispersed, in quiet seriousness.
 And ere the Vision
 faded from my view,
 The sad Refrain had changed
 to melody more buoyant
 —to an air triumphant.
 Now I saw a woman beautiful
 —aye, beautiful beyond
 all other women;

For 't was Vashti,
 Vashti, queen—my queen.
 She was dressed
 in manner fitting for a jaunt.
 There was freedom
 in the movement
 of her limbs;
 No sleeves too large and loose,
 nor skirts to be entangled
 in the wheel,
 Nor corsets cramping her
 free breathing.
 Fashion in no way
 distorted her,
 Or hid what is most beautiful
 of all the forms of Nature
 —hid her woman's form.
 —All its curving lines
 of grace, of beauty,
 all poetic motion
 Were not marred
 by tightened stays,
 protruding bustle,
 or by flaring skirt.
 Vashti's form was lithe,
 was flexile,
 And her eye was bright
 with pleasure:
 Glowing was her face,
 and crimson with the health
 of her young life.
 "I am ready,"
 sang she sweetly,
 "I am ready, gentle Edith,
 what is keeping you,
 my little one, my chum.

Now come
 and have a spin delightful,
 For the day is one most perfect,
 and all Nature sings
 a welcome
 —She is in her
 kindest mood."
 Ere the maiden chum
 came to her,
 Chanced there by
 one not a maiden,
 But instead, a maiden's lover
 (as I saw soon after)!
 Blush of pleasure
 —recognition—
 Flushed the maiden's
 happy face,
 As she lifted hand
 to clasp one
 That had held her hand
 before.
 But the man withheld
 his greeting
 While the maiden
 fondly waited,
 And he glanced
 with cold displeasure
 At the maiden's form
 and dress.
 Stern his visage,
 form unbending;
 In his eyes
 a look severe;
 Quiet, stood he,
 chill, reproachful,
 Cold surprise in all
 his manner.

Checked the gladness
 of the maiden,
Gone the smile
 of welcome for him,
And her eyes fell
 'neath the lashes
While her face
 was half averted.
Then he spoke in tones
 of harshness,
And his words were rough,
 unpolished:
"What an outfit!
 I detest it!
Never in my days and doings
 saw I such a rig before!
It is odious, aye, offensive,
 and I want to say right here,
That, unless from now, forever,
 you discard
 that mode of dress,
Never shall take place
 the marriage we intended."
For a moment
 both stood silent,
 gazing each upon the other:
Chilled the maiden,
 and she coldly
Drew a ring
 off from her finger—
"Here it is
 —the ring you gave me,
Take it back
 —I cannot keep it.
Now, as well as waiting longer,
 learn you, sir,

That woman's thinking,
 and her doing,
 are within herself.
To such spirit of dictation
 she no longer can submit:
If you seek some one
 more yielding,
You are free,
 from now—*Forever*."
With a heart oppressed
 and burdened,
Vashti proudly turned aside,
 till he passed out
 from her presence,
Out forever
 from her heart!
So he passed
 —so passed the lover.
But a lover she had yet
 —one who loved her
 more than ever
—One who stayed;
 for still I lingered
—I who now was Vashti's lover
 —Vashti's only lover.
While I watched her,
 pale, yet lovely,
Edith came,
 and pale, like Vashti;
 on her face a troubled look.
She had changed
 the dress like Vashti's
And she wore
 a woman's gown.
Now she smiled
 when she saw Vashti

—Smiled as if
 in joyous greeting;
 Yet seemed Vashti
 most unmindful
 of the other's gentle grace.
 Then she roused herself
 —did Vashti,
 And she forced a smile
 of greeting,
 But from Edith's
 tender scanning
 Was not hid
 the falling tear.
 "Tell me, dearest,
 what the meaning
 Of this much-surprising
 sorrow,
 —Nay, my sweet one,
 I will hold you,
 And myself
 am with you weeping
 till I know it all—it all."
 Then did Edith,
 sweet, persuasive,
 Learn the burden
 of her sister;
 And in sympathy divine-like,
 lightened it by bearing of it.
 "Come you, sister mine,"
 said Edith,
 "We must hie us back,
 a moment,
 For my robing
 like your own.
 We shall bear this cross
 together.

While your little sister's
 near you,
 You shall never, never carry
 all the cruel load alone."
 And, though gentle
 was this maiden,
 She was firm,
 and had her way;
 And I saw
 that Vashti yielded
 That her chum
 should doff her gown,
 Doff it for a dress
 like Vashti's
 —Dress like that
 which caused her sorrow,
 Cost the lovely girl
 a lover;
 But a dress
 that pleased another,
 Pleased one
 who could love her better
 —Better than
 the tyrant lover—
 (As it seemed
 to her new lover
 —lover now forever).
 Once again I was in Class,
 but now a Sabbath class
 —a Sunday school.
 Ere I saw it
 I had listened
 To such sweet
 and holy chimes
 As flood the soul
 with spirit-life;

That bring to weary,
 burdened hearts,
 a holy peace and calm.
Then I listened
 while the people sang,
 the young and old,
But more the young,
 for there were few
 beyond the years
 of childhood.
This the hymn they sang
 --'t was prayer in song:

Our Father
 who in heaven art,
 To Thee we pray,
 O Holy One;
O hallowed
 may Thy name e'er be,
 Thy kingdom come,
 Thy will be done,
Be done on earth
 as 't is in heaven
—Our Lord, Thy Son,
 himself hath said;
O may we ever
 to Thee pray:
 Give us this day
 our daily bread.
As we
 forgive our debtors here,
 Do Thou
 our trespasses forgive;
Into temptation
 lead us not,
 O may we nearer
 to Thee live.

And now we pray,
 O Holy One,
 That Thou from evil
 us deliver,
 And Thine the kingdom
 evermore,
 The power and glory,
 praise, forever.

Then I saw a class of boys,
 and they were lively,
 boisterous, ardent,
 mirth-provoking.
And their teacher
 was himself a youth.
Then I saw upon his face
 a look to me familiar;
And I wondered if I knew him
 —wondered where I saw him
 in the past.
Then one older, speaking to him,
 called him "Jacob;"
When there came
 within my mind
 a flash of memory,
And I knew that it was he
 who spoke so well
 in championship of Edith.
Now at the sound,
 of gentle tap of bell,
I heard a noise of buzzing
 —as of many voices
 in the air together;
It was noise of all the classes
 —scholars, teachers,
 filling all the room.

"Blessed are the merciful,"
said Jacob,
to the waiting boys.

"This scripture
is our lesson for to-day.

To whom shall we be merciful
—to whom, to what?"

In ready unison of voices
came the answer,
and they said:

"To all—to man
and beast."

"To all,"
the teacher
quick responded,
—"Yes, to man and beast,
to all the creatures
of the Father."

Then he told them
of the thoughtless
cruelties of men

To other men,
to beasts, to brutes:

"Were we ourselves, both dumb
and helpless,

And another,
having power and force,
could make us suffer,

We should cry
within our very souls
for mercy;

We should feel
that he who is not merciful
Hath claim on none for mercy
for himself,

—If man be righteous,
he regardeth life of beast;
—so is the word
of Proverbs.

If man be cruel,
he will brutalize himself;
—this is the word
of Poet."

"Boys are cruel;
—is it of our nature
so to be?"

So questioned one
of thoughtful bearing.

"Not so cruel
is the boy, at heart,
but thoughtless only.

We have seen the boy
delighting in the chase
of pretty butterfly,

The killing
of a harmless squirrel,

The robbing
of the little home of bird,

The worrying of dog
—its cruel torture.

Maiming of dumb animal,
—and heedless
to the mute appeal

Of eyes of eloquence
for life,

For liberty to have
its humble comfort
unmolested.

We have seen the boy
remorseless
in these cruelties,

Nor ever feeling once
a smiting at the heart
For all the needless suffering
he causes.

—But we see the boy
grown older,
And when home and children
have drawn out
The deeper, tender harmonies
of soul and being,
He who, as boy,
was cruel in his very play,
As man,
is tender as a mother-heart
for helpless babes.

But I would have you
tender *now*, my boys,
Would have your hearts
go out in sympathy
for all that suffers,
In a kinder fellowship
for all of God's creation.
I would have you halt
ere you shall rob

The life of that
which never has molested you:
Whose loss

may serve you not;
Of that which you
have power to take,
but *not to give again!*
To take a life unbidden,

as it seems to me,
Is making protest
'gainst the great Creator
of all life

For giving life that you,
in your small wisdom,
Do declare by action
hath no need to be!

Now it may be
that lesser life
Hath been created
for the need and use
of larger life;

If so interpret we
the will of Him
Who is the Father
of all life,

It may be well that we,
(in all the spirit
of the will divine,)
Take life that hath
its use and purpose
to our need.

And in this spirit
—in the spirit of some need,
And in some manner
full in harmony

With all the purposes
of life,
—In spirit such as this
we may, perhaps,
take life we cannot give,
And not embrate
the larger life—our own
—That larger life
that all of smaller life
doth seem to serve.

'But,' you will ask,
'is not creation
all a growth

Of that which hath been living
 on its fellows,
 Till a chain of life,
 (from lowest to the highest,)

Is made up of links
 that are the lives gone out
 for other life?

For, life of one
 is feeding always
 on some other lower life;

And it, in turn,
 doth give its life

As food for higher life;
 till man is reached,

And he his hand controlling lays
 on all the lower life,

And makes it serve his need,
 and makes it yield its life
 to save his own.

Must we not say
 that 't is the will of Him
 who gave all life,

That man shall do
 what all of lower life

Has always done,
 is always doing in its turn?

—Yea, is not this
 the will of Him

Who placed the need upon us
 of existence,

And the power hath given us
 to serve that need?

And I answer you,
 that so to me it seemeth;

But it seemeth even true
 that in the lower life alone

The instinct is
 to always take,
 to kill, destroy;

For as the evolution
 of enlarging life

Finds resting place
 on higher planes,

There is the higher thought
 —the thought divine;

—Not thought of taking life
 —destroying it,

But thought *creative*
 —thought of *giving*

—Thought to *save*, not kill,
 to *help*, not hurt,
 to *aid*, not hinder!

So it is that man
 who reaches higher planes,

(Who nearer comes to Him
 whose image he should bear,)

Has less desire,
 and lesser need,

For hurting, hindering
 other life

 —For taking it
 beyond recall.

The nearer to his own
 the other life,

Along the line
 of its development,

The more to him
 't is sacred

In its right to stay,
 to serve the purpose
 of its being.

We may choose
 those higher planes,

Oh, the hungry
 and the thirsting
 Of the human heart
 for light!
 For the bread
 —the bread and water—
 for the needs of soul;
 Or some key that may unlock
 the awful mystery of Life!
 Now I stood upon the street
 —the crowded thoroughfare
 of noisy city.
 Along the way
 a horse was speeding,
 under lash of reckless driver.
 Now he stumbles,
 does the noble brute,
 And prone
 upon the pavement lies,
 With bulging eyes,
 and gasping breath.
 Crowded round the fallen brute
 was group of idlers
 —men and boys;
 And from the windows
 there were gazing
 men and women,
 As the manner is of accidents
 upon the street.
 Then I saw that he
 who drove his horse
 so hardly, to his death,
 In anger was
 and heartless mood.
 “Oh, shoot him,”
 cried the fellow, roughly,

“He is done for,
 and the quicker out the way
 the better!”
 Among the lookers-on were boys
 who in the Sunday class
 Had learned
 the lesson of humaneness.
 Shocked their hearts
 —their hearts yet tender—
 By the sight of brutal coarseness,
 and the cruelty of man.
 “Isn’t he a brute?”
 exclaimed one,
 “If he were my father,”
 said another,
 “Do you think I’d own him?”
 —Never, never!”
 Said another:
 “Our old nag is past a workin’
 And we haven’t
 ever harnessed him
 for years
 —For more ’n four or five,
 I reckon;
 But d’ye think we’d treat him
 like that fellow does a his’n?
 Betcher boots we wouldn’t
 —would we, Billy?”
 “You wouldn’t do it—never,”
 Billy reckoned heartily.
 “Guess you like him
 just as much
 Or more ’n when
 you worked him,”
 Further answered Billy,
 with fine loyalty.

"More 'n ever," said the boy,
 "I guess we do,
 and, anyways,
 If only for the good he's done,
 we wouldn't let him suffer;
 —For the good he's done,
 and not for what
 he's good for now!"
 But, doomed the beast
 of hopeless burden,
 For there came
 a minion of the law,
 In uniform
 of brass and color.
 Under gaze
 of thronging seers,
 Made he end,
 by leaden bullet,
 Of the life within the beast
 --the life, as one may see it.
 "What a brute!"
 the boys cried, hotly;
 And their words
 were not intended
 For the beast
 in death low-lying,
 But another brute still living
 —for a brute
 they called—a man.
 A moment after,
 on the horse's neck
 I saw a chain,
 and there was one
 Who came with mules
 to drag the body
 to the burying.

Still the boys
 were lingering near,
 To see the doings of their elders,
 and the ending of a scene
 to them a tragedy.
 "Say, mister," said a lad,
 to him who had the mules
 in hand,
 ' Now ain't you goin'
 to say a word
 about the horse
 —Say somethin' over him
 —say somethin' good
 before you bury him?"
 "Yes, give the horse a funeral,"
 said another,
 "Quick, let's off our hats
 —now, boys."
 The driver halted,
 for a moment puzzled,
 Questioning the meaning
 of the boys.
 When it flashed upon his mind
 that they were serious,
 And would have religious rites
 and proper burial
 For the carcass,
 loud he laughed;
 But only half in ridicule,
 and half, himself,
 in serious mood.
 On second thought
 he swore an hybrid oath,
 And started up the mules;
 and so the boys (and beast)
 were cheated of a funeral.

Anon there came two girls,
 swift speeding
 on their wheels.
 On seeing this, the boys
 forgot their little grief,
 And with a loud "hurra!"
 ran wildly on
 to meet the girls
 And give them greeting
 —of its kind.

"Ho, bloomers!"
 cried they out, in chorus,
 Knickerbock, forever
 —what a guy!"

"How now, Miss Wanton,"
 said another;
 —Then he saw a look of pain
 pass o'er the face
 of one of these fair girls,
 And quickly
 did he check himself
 as one ashamed.

Now I saw that she was Edith,
 and the other, Vashti!

And I saw the boy
 was hurt in mind.
 And to a mate
 said hurriedly:

" 'Tis our own teacher
 in the Sunday school;
 And we have shamed her
 —shamed the one we love
 the best of all."

"No, shamed ourselves, I guess,"
 the other answered,

More ourselves than her
 —I wonder did she know us?"

Then I saw the first boy
 cried, in his vexation,
 And he vowed he'd never dare
 to see her face again.

Now, rough and rude
 as was this greeting,
 Still the girls were helpless;
 and no answer
 could they give,

But blush, and pale,
 and—move along.

Nor was there one
 on all the street
 To chide the boys
 or stay their hand;
 Yet there were standing by,
 an officer,
 And beings dressed as men,
 who laughed derisively.

All sympathy had spent itself,
 it seemed, on dust of brute;
 And none was left
 for gentle maidens
 —Mothers yet to be, perchance,
 of boys and men.

And I was angered,
 when I saw it all,
 And wondered:
 Is the person then
 of every citizen,
 Save her most helpless
 —save the woman,
 safe from insult
 and assault?

So it seemed to be,
 in this a land
Of righteousness
 and liberty.
And wondered I what sentiment
 was there abroad,
That scenes like this
 could come before mine eyes!
The scene was changed;
 —it was a home
—One beautiful,
 and Edith entering.
She was flushed in face,
 and had a troubled look;
And when she entered
 sought she soon and found
 her mother.
Dropping on her knees,
 she buried face
 in mother's lap,
And then the pent-up flood
 was open,
And the trembling girl
 was sobbing bitterly.
No question
 asked the tender mother;
—Only waited for the girl
 to speak.
“They called me wanton,”
 Edith said, at last.
“And you were brave,”
 the mother answered
 “only brave, my darling.”
Then I turned my face,
 and left them there;

As if a place
 too holy for all others
—Left them there
 where this sweet maid
Might in the slumb'rous comfort
 of a mother's arms,
Find peace and rest
 denied her by her fellows
 —man or boy!
And now I saw that Edith
 was again awheeling,
But was dressed in skirts
 (as women are when walking);
For it seemed
 her courage failed her
For a longer martyrdom
 in doffing skirts again
 —for even Vashti's sake!
Now she and Vashti
 were again together,
And 'twas Vashti only
 who, in dress more fitting
For the wheeling,
 dared to brave the ridicule
 of thoughtless boy,
And vulgar gaze
 of ruder man.
Along the street
 the girls were spinning,
When they heard,
 the warning sound
 of clanging bell,
And thundering clatter
 on the pavement
Of the wheels of engine
 speeding to a fire.

On their way,
 and coming toward them,
 saw they plunging horses,
 As if mad with speed
 and lash of driver.
 Quick the street was cleared
 for right of way
 And all the air was tense
 with deep excitement.
 Now the girls made haste
 to turn from danger.
 Vashti quick dismounted,
 and with ease,
 But dress of Edith,
 (in her aim to turn aside
 and spring off
 from her wheel,)
 Fast caught in spokes,
 and Edith fell
 upon the stony pavement.
 She was lifted,
 and most tenderly,
 By one who soonest came
 to aid her:
 Then I saw that Edith
 was unconscious;
 And that he who came
 so quickly,
 Lifted her so tenderly,
 —was John.
 And now I heard
 the sad Refrain again.
 It seemed to voice the sorrow
 of a breaking human heart;
 It seemed to be the wail
 of hopeless agony.

And then I saw
 a long procession,
 As of mourners,
 moving to a burial.
 Yet, I saw they sorrowed not
 as they who have no hope;
 For black was not
 the emblem of their grief.
 All *white* the carriage
 that was bearing
 To its resting-place
 the body of the dead.
 No hearse was there
 with lofty plumes
 of ostentatious mourning;
 And no fashionable woe
 expressed by robing
 —all conventional—
 of bearers.
 Nor hired were the vehicles
 of burial
 Whereby could mourning be
 by proxy
 (As in the older days
 when weepers by profession
 Wept more loudly
 than the ones bereaved!)
 But there was grief
 —and sorrow all intense—
 As one would sorrow
 at the absence long prolonged,
 But not the loss,
 of those best loved of all.
 They seemed to sorrow
 as do they whose absent ones
 are near in spirit,

And as looking for the day
 when they will meet again,
 And for companionship
 more joyous than before.
 And so no solemn funeral dirge
 was sung,
 And no display
 of hopeless grief;
 But, in the march
 that led to burying-place
 of mortal body,
 There was melody
 of life triumphant
 and eternal.
 Yet was there among them
 one who sorrowed
 In a way more hopeless
 than the others.
 This was John
 who mourned as they
 who have no hope,
 Who had no ray of light
 before him.
 Vashti walked
 beside her brother;
 In her maiden fashion
 she had laid her hand
 upon his arm,
 And in her sympathy
 and tender love
 I saw her look up in his face
 to comfort him;
 And more than e'er before
 I loved her,
 Vashti beautiful
 —so sweet, so brave.

And now I saw the coffin
 and upon its lid
 I read these words,
 —these simple words,
 “Our Edith.”
 Plain the service,
 for it was not formal.
 Ere it ended
 one there was
 who forward came
 And, in a poem,
 voiced the hopefulness of life
 —of death itself!
 And when 't was o'er,
 they waited not to hear
 The hollow sound,
 or mockery of sound,
 Of falling clod
 upon the coffin
 —Empty coffin,
 empty of all else but clay
 —The dust to dust,
 its purpose served,
 And back to its own
 mother Earth,
 To make again the round
 in further service
 of the needs of Life.
 They left the grave, and singing
 —singing song triumphant,
 That had in it sentiment
 of spirit life and presence.
 So they passed
 out from my sight,
 And all to me was lost,
 save memory.

So the one what does it
 has to be a murd'rer!
 Say, was *she* killed?
 (pointing to the grave),
 Who killed her then
 —you orter know."
 He paused,
 and all were silent.
 "Well, you know, as well as me,
 and everybody knows;
 For if we'd let her go that day
 and hadn't shamed her,
 like we did,
 She'd be alive to-day
 like we are now;
 then who's her murd'ers?"
 When he paused,
 they answered, "We are."
 Meekly, and repentant
 did they answer.
 "Yes, *we* killed her
 —killed our teacher
 What we loved,
 and more than all of them,
 so we're her murd'ers."
 Here he paused again,
 and let the force of silence
 go beyond the power
 of words.
 "Now we can't help what's done;
 what's done is done,"
 he said:
 "She's gone,
 and we can't bring her back
 For all our tryin'.
 —Yes, she's—gone."

Again he paused,
 to clear his voice,
 And drew a dirty hand
 across a freckled face
 To hide the signs
 of sobbing heart.
 "If we can't bring *her*
 back to life,
 There's one thing we *can* do,
 for we can stop right off
 akillin' others.
 Now fellers,
 near the very grave of her
 —Above the very corpse
 (they called it)
 Of the beautifulest girl,
 we ever knowed
 (now all were weeping),
 We're agoin' to swear;
 —I mean we're goin' to take
 —to take the oath
 we spoke of.
 Off your caps 'n fold your hands
 'n shet yer eyes
 —You, Tom, 'n you, Bill Gunder,
 ready, swear;
 You say the words,
 right after me:
 We swear by all that's good
 to swear by,
 That we're sorry
 that we killed her
 —Close yer eyes,
 you murd'ers—
 And we never, never, never'll
 do it

In our lives again
 —so help us!
 An' we vow that when we see
 a boy or man,
 Insult a girl, or woman,
 or that cries out at her dress,
 Or says a word that hurts
 her feelin's,
 We'll soon let 'em know
 who's her protector,
 An' we'll tell them
 they'll be murd'rers
 'Fore they know it
 like we were.
 An' then we'll stop 'em
 if we can,
 An' if we can't
 we'll call a cop.
 Now lift your hands,
 an' swear by her that's gone."
 "We swear," they said.
 "Let's join together
 so we'll have a 'ciety,"
 said one;
 "Let's have our members
 and our officers,
 And have a pledge,
 and all."
 "Yes, let's," the leader said,
 and readily;
 And then and there
 they improvised and organized,
 In mimicry, unconscious,
 of the ways of men.
 "The first thing is the pledge;"
 so said the leader.

"Put your finger
 on your forard,
 Let it linger
 there, you coward."
 "We're not cowards,"
 said a boy, in anger.
 "Yes, you are, 'n all of us,
 'n so is men,
 The things we tackle
 are the littlest things of all;
 It's so ahuntin', so in fishin',
 so it is, I guess, in fightin'.
 We're the bravest
 when we've got
 the biggest chances;
 Them that blows the most's
 the biggest cowards,
 ain't they?"
 "Yes," they all agreed,
 and bravely,
 As the manner is
 of those whose chances
 are the smallest.
 "Say the pledge again.
 Now put your finger
 on your forard,
 Let it linger there, you coward;
 —that's the skull.
 Now close your fists
 'n cross your wrists;
 for *that's the cross-bones*.
 Hold your cross-bones
 'gainst your skull
 An' say the pledge
 with me:

We pledge we'll never
in our lives
insult a woman."

"Never," answered all,
in chorus.

Leader—"Girl or woman?"

Others—"Girl or woman."

L.—"An' we pledge
we'll not speak ill
of woman;"

O.—"Never will speak ill
of woman,
girl or woman."

L.—"An' we pledge
we'll help a woman
every time we can;"

O.—"Every time we can
we'll help a woman.

L.—"Help our mothers,
or our sisters,
An' the other fellers'
mothers, sisters,
or their daughters
—help all women;"

O.—"Ours an' every feller's
mother, sisters,
an' their daughters."

L.—"Pledge that we'll
stand up for women always;"

O.—"We'll stand up
for women, always."

L.—"We'll not sit,
an' let a woman stand
That ought to sit
—we'll stand;"

O.—"Yes, we'll stand,
we pledge we'll stand
an' let the woman sit."

L.—"Pledge we'll let *her* sit
—God bless the woman."

O.—"Let her sit
—God bless her."

L.—"We'll be loyal fellers,
an' we'll always
Lift our caps to her
—by that she'll know us."

Then they pledged themselves
as Loyal Fellows,

And they said:
"We'll take the name as ours."
And well I thought the boys
deserved it—noble fellows;
May their tribe increase
—the Loyals.

So I mused, and hoped
that there might be but few
(of older, as of younger,)
Who would not be in it
—in the boys' society.

And, as for me, I said,
"A Loyal I would wish to be
forever."

"Is there penalty?" said one;
"Yes, Yes," the others cried.
"A penalty! A penalty!"
"Let's have a penalty!
And what's it
goin' to be?"

"A penalty for what?"
the leader asked;

"For breakin' pledge,"
they answered.

"This'll be the penalty,"
the leader said:

"If one of us is seen ahootin'
at a girl that's ridin'
on a wheel,

(An' 'cause he doesn't like
her dress,)

He'll have to be, himself,
dressed up in bloomers,

An' a rope
tied round his ankles,

An' the rope'll be
as long's a cable

—More 'n a hundred feet,
I guess—

An' then a girl
that's ridin' on a wheel

'll take one end the rope,
An' then he'll have to foller her

as fast as she
can make him go.

—So that'll be
his skull and cross-bones!"

Questioned one
in troubled expectation:

"Will he have to make the sign
of 'skull and cross-bones'
all the time he's runnin'?"

"Yes, of course,"
the answer was,

"Of course he will,
—n then we'll call him,
'Bloomers!'

—Go it, Bloomers!

You're a manly man—you are,
But all the same
you've got to take
your medicine!"

—Yes, that'll be the penalty;
now, how d' ye like it?"

And they liked it well
—each thinking of it
For the other fellow,
not himself
(The generous fellows
—men in embryo)!

Now I saw
that, standing by the boys,
Was Vashti
and her brother John.
Unnoticed by myself,
and by the boys,
had been their coming;
And the boys were shamed
at seeing them
—As if their doings
had been ill.

But Vashti's smile
of friendly greeting
quick assured them.

You'll forgive us, boys,
for seeing;
—Bless you, for your loyalty
to woman."

"We're the ones to be forgiven,"
said the leader,

"An' there's somethin' more
to ask:

Won't you forgive us
 for Miss Edith;
 It would be like having her
 forgive us—if you would?"
 "Dear Edith knows it all,"
 she answered,
 "And already
 you're forgiven;
 More, she loves you,
 as I love you;
 Bless your hearts,
 you meant no ill;
 And good will come
 --must come—at last,
 from all this seeming evil."
 —Yet I saw that in her smile,
 a sob was hiding!
 "What's the name
 of your society?"
 Was Vashti's question next;
 as if to turn
 The current of their thought
 away from Edith.
 "Won't you name it?"
 One besought her:
 "Name it, John," she said;
 and John said, quickly:
 "If I named it,
 I would name it
 for its object
 —For Promoting Justice,
 Courtesy, Civility
 And Kindness
 to All Girls and Women."
 And the name was
 to the liking of the boys.

Then Vashti added, sweetly,
 as was Vashti's way:
 "But one thing is there lacking
 in it all—
 Now make it open
 for the men full-grown;
 For, greater is the need
 with them
 Than with my boys—my Loyals
 —for its teachings."
 So it ended, and again
 was Vashti gone from me!
 Now I was taken
 to the farm again.
 It had an air
 as if deserted.
 Something told me
 all were gone.
 Now there came
 one who was aged;
 And he seemed as one
 whom all the world
 Had buffeted,
 and left alone.
 He also found (as I had found)
 no faces that he knew.
 Then slowly wandered he
 out to the fields,
 And there, alone,
 he sorely wept.
 And there I left him,
 with the sound
 Still in my ears of this strange,
 plaintive melody, and words
 That he, in trembling voice,
 and solitude, had sung:

'Tis true, it is as graceful
as when, in other days,
It wound along in beauty
to the top; but as I gaze
This musing hour upon it,
sad tears my eyelids fill,
For something's gone, forever,
from the old path up the hill.

The sunlight and the shadow
rest upon it, with the same
Dear benedictive presence,
as in the days when came
No aching care to haunt me,
from morn to eve at will,
Ere something passed forever
from the old path up the hill.

The breezes, as they loiter by,
the old airs fondly croon,
The blythe birds in the tree-tops
sing as in my life's lost June,
And, as then, the myriad
blossoms
all around their wealth distill
But there's something gone,
forever, from the old path
up the hill.

Something—a face—a touch of
hand
—a voice—a presence—lo,
A world that brought me heaven
—all vanished, with the flow
Of pauseless time, and slowly
along I wander still—

With something gone forever,
from the old path up the hill.

Would ye might come again
—again

—O days so dear to me,
And give me back the glory
of my life's sweet Arcady!
For, though summer reigns,
a goddess,
in my heart lives winter's
chill,

Since something's gone forever,
from the old path up the hill.

I lift my wet eyes skyward,
and plead: "Why must it
be—

This inmost desolation,
this awful misery?"
But Silence mocks my heart's
cry,
fresh tears my eyelids fill—
Ah! something's gone forever,
from the old path up the hill.

The sun, in royal splendor,
is flushing all the west;
The day is dying—dying
—'twill soon be time to rest;
—But, ah! no rest for me,
as all alone I wander still—
With something gone, forever,
from the old path up the hill.

And now I heard
the sad Refrain again,

And it was like a wail of sorrow
from a human heart
near broken.

From out this wail

I heard a voice,
And listening,

I heard these words,
And knew 't was Vashti,
singing:

*I'm nobody's darling
—I'm nobody's darling,
The world is all heedless
—is heedless of tears,
My light is gone out
and my heart is all desolate,
Desolate now,
in the flood-tide of years;
Oh, why will none love me,
none love me, none love me,
Oh, why is this dearth
in mine heart—in mine heart,
Oh, why has no soul
in its own heart its yearning,
Forbidding this drifting
these long years apart;—*

*And nobody's darling,
ah! nobody's darling,
The whole world so heedless,
so heedless of tears,
One's light all gone out
and one's heart all desolate;
—Desolate now
in the flood-tide of years.*

*Oh, is there no love-life,
no love-life, no love-life,
Some world not all heedless
—so heedless of tears,
No light all gone out
and no heart all desolate,
But ever a gladsome
flood-tide of years?
O yes, there's some love-life,
I know, Oh, I know,
Where's never a dearth
in one's heart—in one's heart;
Each soul for some other,
another for each one,
And nevermore drifting
nor hung'ring apart;—*

*But somebody's darling,
yes, somebody's darling,
A world not unkindly,
and no more of tears,
One's heart never burdened,
and nevermore desolate,—
Always a glad-time
and flood-time of years.*

Then in the anguish
of my sympathy for Vashti,
I awoke, and found myself
on mine own couch,
And, lo! 't was morning
—it was all a dream!

Aye, 't was all a dream,
and yet, it seemed so real,
I could but think

I was not dreaming
when I saw the Vision.

And Vashti, none so real to me
as she;

In all my thoughts,
for days, for weeks,
was Vashti present.

In my dreams I saw her,
in my days I mused of her;
And oft I asked if it might be
that Vashti lives,
And sometime would she
come to me—be mine?

And yet I knew it could not be
—for was it not a dream!
And what are dreams?

Vagaries of the mind,
all uncontrolled by reason!
This the answer,
but no clearer than before,
the thought,

For still the question
is unanswered
—what are dreams?

Now, often, in those days,
I sang of Vashti, sang to her:
As did the lover, in the Vision,
to his bride.

I sang this song:

*O Vashti fair,
my love for thee,
Is like the surge
of swelling sea;*

*Nor time nor tide
more changeless be
Than is my love,
sweet maid, for thee,
O Vashti fair!
O Vashti fair!
Than is my love,
sweet maid, for thee,
O Vashti fair!*

*O Vashti fair,
where'er it be
Thy home—if in
the earth or sea—
My heart has love
for none but thee,
O Vashti fair!
for none but thee,
O Vashti fair!
O Vashti fair!
My heart has love
for none but thee,
O Vashti fair.*

*My Vashti fair,
O come to me,
As, in my dreams,
I came to thee,
If thou art real,
my bride to be,
O Vashti fair,
my bride to be,
O Vashti fair!
O Vashti fair!
If thou be real,
O come to me,
My Vashti fair!*

And once I dreamed
at mid-day clear
—nor was I sleeping,
And I heard the Voices
as they sang:

O Vashti lives
—will come to thee;
Nor in the earth
nor in the sea
She lives; but near,
and lives to be
Thine own—thine own
—thy bride to be,
O Vashti fair!
O Vashti fair!
She lives, and near,
thy bride to be,
O Vashti fair!

So did I sing,
and they, the Voices;
Yet the thought
—though sweet—
That Vashti lived—was near me
—would be mine
—This thought
was of the things
that are of life
—The things not real
—less real, perchance,
than dreams.
And so the days went on,
and, at the last,
all hope was gone:
For well I knew
I had been dreaming only

—Well I knew my mind
had played me
tricks fantastic,
—As the mind is wont to do
when dreaming
—sleeping or awake.
So passed the days,
and still no sign
of Vashti mine;
Yet Love outlasted Hope
and always
did my heart remember.
Aye, so passed the days,
and at the last, was I content
to dream her real:
And then I said: "Sometime
(in other life, perchance,)
Will Love and Hope
be reconciled.
So passed the days;
and even dreams
—my empty dreams—
Were real to me, at last;
and I was comforted
by Vashti's hope
That somewhere
is a Love-Life,
And with nevermore of drifting,
or of hungering in the heart
—Where always is a glad-time
and a flood-time of the years.
Now, in this mood was I
when something strange
befell me;
I was sitting
in my chair, in office,

And was prone
to slumber,
When mine head bent low
upon my desk,
and I was sleeping.

Then I rose, anon,
with what intent
I had no thought,
And with no word explaining,
passed out on the street.

Along the crowded way
I went,
No thought controlling,
save some purpose
undefined.

Turned I at last,
and, through a door
all unfamiliar,
Mounted, step by step,
a stairway,
—Deigning not to take the lift
that waited there inviting.

Unquestioning, I made my way,
until I stood before a door;
Then turned the knob,
nor waited bid of entrance.

Once within, I let the door
swing back to place,
And gave no heed
to noise it made in closing.

Then I walked across the floor
and stood beside a chair
Wherein a maiden fair
was sitting.

She was leaning forward,
and I saw
that she was troubled
—Burdened with some task,
or problem,

That was baffling
her own solving.

Glancing at a sheet
that lay before her,

I there saw
a needed answer.

Reaching forward, then,
I took her hand in mine,
And made it write in answer
to her questionings.

Quickly turned the girl,
and glancing up
(as one surprised),

Her eyes looked into mine,
and then I knew
't was—Vashti!

When she saw my face,
she, for a moment
lost her smile in wonder;

And she questioned by a look,
the meaning of my coming.

Then I smiled, in quiet way,
and re-assuring,

—Smiled as one
who knew her well.

And Vashti seemed to bring me
from her memory;

and her smile,
(That rare, sweet smile

that none but Vashti
ever gave to me,)

Made all her face aglow,
and, in the joy of it,
I turned away
and toward the door,
Through the door,
and down the stairs.
Out on the street,
along the way,
And back again
to where I toiled,
I went with speeding feet,
and heart of gladness.
Then I sat me at my desk,
and fell once more to slumber.
When I woke
I had a happiness
That lifted me above the world,
as if on wing.
A happiness
beyond the speaking
was the thought
That Vashti lived
—had smiled on me,
And I had hope
to win her as mine own
—O joy the thought!
What happiness to know
it was no dream
—What I had seen before
—the Visions
—All the songs, the classes,
pictures, melodies,
or sad or buoyant.
No baseless fabric of a vision
was my dream,

But it was real and, best of all,
was Vashti living.
Now a mate, beside me
(of my toil companion)
Spoke me, smilingly:
“A jolly sleep you had,
And something in your dreams
has made you happy;
Tell us of it—
saw you one you love?”
I smiled, and answered;
“Nay, not in my sleep,
and dreams, I saw her;
But my joy is of my visit
in the hour of absence
Ere I slumbered here
again.
I may not tell you of it now;
but, later, you will know,
perchance.
—Was I long gone
—how long asleep?”
He smiled, and answered:
“Nay, you slept
the time away,
and dreamed:
But short your hour
as minutes are
—not five in all!
Yet this will I concede
to your own thought:
If to be off,
is to be gone away,
Then were you gone indeed;
for one may swear

That you went off
 --went off to sleep!"
 Whereat he loudly laughed
 at his own humor;
 But I had no heart
 for merriment,
 and joined him not.
 Gone, again, my happiness,
 and Vashti
 --Vashti, but a dream;
 yet did I love her
 even as a dream;
 And all the hours,
 awake or sleeping,
 Vashti was beside me
 --Vashti of my dreaming,
 but as real to me as life.
 And ever did I mourn
 the ending of it all
 --The ending
 of the romance of my life
 --my only one,
 For Vashti only, could I love,
 since I have dreamed of her;
 Yet like the end of others
 was mine own;
 --Though they had found
 and lost,
 While I had lost
 who had not found!
 Such is the paradox
 in Life!
 Now time went on
 and then it came
 That Hope
 was fast o'ertaking Love.

It chanced that with a friend,
 I strolled along
 an unaccustomed way;
 And while abroad
 we talked together
 As the manner is
 of friends congenial.
 Now our theme
 was such as this:
 --Of Life--of Death--of Mystery
 of Dreams and Visions
 (sleeping and awake).
 We talked of what was real,
 and what imagined
 (or that had such seeming).
 What is Life? we asked;
 and what is Death?
 Are either real--are both?
 Which is the real,
 and which the seeming?
 Which is Death--which Life?
 But questionings like these
 led all too deep
 for my divining;
 For not schooled was I
 in studies of the soul,
 of occult things;
 Of things ununderstandable
 to me,
 That other men explain
 with ease and fluently.
 But listened I to him
 --my friend--
 Who of these themes absorbing
 was beyond his fellows wise;

And heard I him
in his own pleasing way
make rare discourse.

Now, in his thought,
the things
That are most real in seeming
are the most imagined;
—What, in our own minds
are things imagined,
are the real!

And dreams, he said,
(what we call dreams.)
Mayhap are the realities of Life,
and only these are real!

So Death!
To him 't was not the real;
Except as it was Life itself
(and larger life)!

Or, better, Death, as Death,
is all imagined;
But as Life 't is real
—far more
than is our living here!

So his discourse
was wise and deep;
But farther in the depths to me
than was the mystery before!

Yet had it Hope;
and Hope was more
my seeking now
Than all things else
—but Love;

And Love—was it not yet
mine own?

Of all his talk
the ending I remember well
—'t was this:

*I dreamed,
and thought I was awake,
I woke,
and thought
that I was dreaming,
The seeming
proved to be the real,
And it—the real—
to be the seeming!*

So hoped I it would be with me,
for then would Vashti come.

At this I thought
to tell him of my dreams
—my visions
(For I ne'er had told them yet
to any).

But the telling
had not well begun,
When heard we
sound of music
And the tripping of light feet,
in joyous whirl of dancing.

Now the music
(and the dancing)
Had a sound to me
familiar;
And (before my mem'ry
brought the older scene
before me),

Lo! beside us standing,
with us both there list'ning,
Was the little maiden messenger,
as in my dream I saw her!

This the very place,
 and all was as I saw it.
 She was standing as before,
 in posture as one tired
 and wearied,
 Drinking in the harmonies
 of heaven,
 opened to her senses,
 And quenching thirst
 as of a famished soul.
 More; on her shoulders
 was the self-same wrap
 —The remnant off a train
 of maiden's robing
 That, in comedy, before,
 had warmed her,
 as a cape or cloak!
 I said that I would question her
 —before the end;
 For of a chain invisible
 that bound me to my Vashti,
 was she not a link?
 If that which was a comedy,
 and in a dream,
 were prophecy, were real,
 Much more must that be real
 that was no play
 —That was all Life
 —all Soul—all Love.
 Aye, now was I to find my love
 —to meet her—know her
 —make her mine
 —mine own—my Vashti.
 Hold! my heart impatient, hold!
 —Too fast thine hoping!

—This my sight so real,
 less than the Vision was
 in lasting;
 When the music ceased,
 and paused the dancing,
 We were waiting for a moment,
 in the thrill of something
 That was like a spell
 upon the soul,
 That none had dared
 to break.
 —While waiting thus,
 a voice took up the harmony
 and sang with feeling rare
 A song of sentiment
 most tender.
 Words and melody
 both caught my ear
 (but more the words);
 Nor could I help
 but listen to the end.
 When it was done
 I turned me
 To the maid beside me
 for the questioning;
 —But, O my heart!
 the maid was gone!
 Nor need I say I chided me
 for careless loss of chance
 —Aye, chance it was,
 for surely 'twere not Fate
 To fail its mission
 in the very ending!
 At the end I questioned,
 if it were the real
 —this seeming.

If a seeming only,
 then the Vision
 were not real:
 Were the Vision real,
 could this my very seeing
 be a vision only?
 —Days passed on
 and still no sign of Vashti.
 Then was Hope again behind
 and lagging in the race;
 For Love ne'er halted
 in her speeding.
 Now, at best, I said,
 could Hope but overtake;
 For Love would never lag
 nor fall behind,
 Nor would she halt
 if even Vashti
 were less real than Life;
 Or, if more real
 than visions.
 So again, I asked myself:
 Is not this life
 The dream of other life
 more real?
 —This life
 —the whole of it—
 Is it the dream
 of other larger, fuller life,
 A dream to have
 its morning and its waking?
 If it were true, there were,
 e'en in this dream of living,
 something of reality.
 And then my heart gave answer
 over all my questioning;

If in what has a seeming,
 there is something real,
 This must it be (if only this)
 —it must be—Love.
 If there be Love,
 then Vashti lives.
 And so the days had passed,
 nor came to me my Vashti.
 Love went on before
 and beckoned,
 But was Hope behind
 and lingering;
 Till, at last, her smile was gone
 —was smile of Hope—
 For she was not
 within my vision now.
 The days have passed;
 and this the ending
 of my dream
 —My dream of Love
 —my thought of Life!
 Now may I sing
 (as did the lover
 in my dream):
 O Glorious Night!
 O Love of Mine!
 But this I may not sing
 (as he had sung):
 O Star of Hope!
 O World of Joy!
 For Hope and Joy are not for me,
 who lost ere yet he found!
 To me it seems the way of Life
 but leadeth into Shadows
 And is lost
 ere yet 't is well begun

—Ere yet the brilliance
 of the Light
Hath made its home
 within the Soul!
So in the Shadow
 of my hopeless Love
 —my loveless Life—
I write this story
 of my dreaming;
And the while I
 pen the words,
My mind is surging
 with the melody
That in my Vision
 haunted me
—That strange, sweet,
 sad Refrain of Life!
So ends it all;
 and naught is left but Love,
 and memory of a dream!

A year has passed
 since I have written
What is gone before,
 as now it stands;
And I have yet to tell
 the strangest of it all
 —the strangest, but the best.
It chanced
 that on an autumn day
 I was alone and wheeling,

When the sky was darkening
 in the promise of a storm.
While quickening speed,
 in hope to reach some shelter,
Saw I three before me
 who with same intent
Were wheeling fast
 along the way.
Ere I had overtaken them,
 it chanced that one
 —a maiden—
Slackened speed
 and fell behind,
And in a moment
 had dismounted
For some mending of the gear
 that answered ill
 her need for haste.
Now at the warning
 of a thunder peal
 and drops of rain,
I stayed my progress at her side
 and quick dismounting,
 to the maiden said:
“My wheel—please take it
 —I will follow
 with your own.”
She turned inquiringly,
 and in her upward glance
I saw—O heart of mine!
 —’t was Vashti!
On her face was smile
 of recognition,
And it blended with a look
 of wonder, welcome,

Then she quick obeyed
 my thought,
 and mounted,
Waiting but to speak
 her gratefulness,
In way that made
 an easy pleasure
 of my little duty.
Then she followed on
 to overtake the friends
Who only now
 had noted her delay,
 and back were turning.
Nor was I behind them far,
 for quickly had I seen
The fault that hindered
 in her wheeling,
 and had made adjustment.
Nor is need of saying
 that a smile before me
 drew me faster on
Than did the elements
 of Nature drive me.

Aye, and now no need
 to make the telling long
 of all that followed.
In the finding of my Vashti
 was the whole
—Was Hope renewed,
 was Love made glad,
 was Life and meaning.

Ere they reached the shelter,
 I had overtaken them,
And, in her thoughtful way,
 had Vashti
Dropped again behind,
 and welcomed me beside her.
At the shelter, I was given
 heartly greeting
And acquaintance
 with the friends.
But there I wondered
 at our meeting,
And I questioned—
 was I dreaming,
When I saw
 these friends of Vashti
Were her sister Ruth,
 and Jacob!

Now did time speed on
 and faster than before,
For Vashti oft was wheeling
 in those days;
And she was ne'er alone
 —nor I when Vashti wheeled.
And there were those
 who called us lovers;
Nor had I a thought
 to make pretense
Of any protest
 'gainst this naming
 of our friendship.
But to Vashti
 I had yet to speak in words
 my love;

Though it had seemed to me
I oft had spoken
more than words could utter,
And that Vashti knew
the language of my soul.

One day when we alone
were having sweet
companionship
We spoke of many things,
and, of them all,
Most in my thought

was this—
I questioned: "Saw you me
before the friendly storm
and accident
That gave me privilege
so welcome
—had we met before?"

(For I was thinking
of the Vision
And my dream
of finding her).

"I saw you in the office
when you came so suddenly
nor expected,
And away again as quickly
and no word explaining!"
"But was I in any office once
and saw you there?"

I asked in seeming doubt.
"Do you forget so soon!"
and saying this, she laughed
—A rippling laugh
that was her own

—One more than music
to my ear,
And one that thrilled my being,
loved I it so well.
"Nay, I do not forget," I said;
"nor could it be,
with face of one so fair
As that I saw,
to haunt my memory.
I do not forget,
nor said I that I saw you not,
Nor had not left
in manner strange
and sudden;
Only questioned I if we had met
—if you had seen me
e'er before
—Or ere the day we met
when wheeling?"
Vashti laughed again:
"A riddle it must be," she said,
"One fitting well the mystery
Of so strange appearing
and a stranger going.
Nor have I a thought
to chide you
For your holding back
the answer at your will;
But riddle it must surely be,
and one I may not solve
alone."
"Then may I help you?"
questioned I;
And Vashti answered gaily:
"You the answer have already
—'t is your riddle

And no solving do you need;
but you may tell me,
for no clue have I
for solving."

"Nay," I said,
"it is my riddle,
yet another's
—not alone mine own;
And so the solving
is for *both*."

Now, neither can, alone,
find answer,
Nor can all the world
outside.

As you have need of help
of mine,
So I have need
for thine."

I said the words
with tone that spoke
A deeper feeling
than the thought
of careless riddle,
With the tone that fitted well
the riddle of our lives
—of Vashti's and mine own.

Then Vashti quiet grew,
nor answered.

"May I help you?"
questioned I again,
in pleading tone.

Yet Vashti waited
for a moment longer,
then she said:

"We'll try alone,
—a little longer, then—"

But when she paused,
I said:
"Then failing answer,
you will help me, Vashti,
And it will come
—the answer."

Now she ne'er before
had heard me
Speak her name
in manner so familiar;
Yet, though startled,
as if in surprise,
No protest did she make
to my assurance.

Then was I in mood
to say, "My Vashti,"
But I waited,
wisely, as I thought,
In fear of answer
like that made before
By Vashti
(as I dreamed it was).

Yea, I had gone full far
already,
And must patient be
a little longer.

Nor was patience
hard or heavy,
As in all the days
when Hope was gone;
For Vashti gave me
sweet companionship,
and smiled upon me.

Now was Hope
fast overtaking Love

(Though Love
 had long outlasted it).
 Not many days had passed
 ere I again
 Had sweet companionship
 with Vashti.
 "Now a question, if I may,"
 I said,
 "Did e'er you see me other time
 than in the office
 near your chair?"
 And Vashti answered:
 "Sometimes I have thought
 I knew you long before.
 At times it so has seemed
 to me,
 And then I tell myself,
 'Not so;'
 For I had never known one
 and forgotten.
 I do not forget
 the friends I meet,
 When once I know them
 —know and—like.
 Nay, though you seem
 a friend of old,
 It must not be
 that we have met before."
 "If you remember best
 the friends you like,
 Was I, mayhap, one to be known
 and unremembered?"
 So I questioned
 and in playful way,
 but earnestly.

"Nay, you are one
 to be remembered well,"
 she said;
 And then her eyes fell
 'neath my questioning gaze.
 But ere I spoke again,
 another word had Vashti:
 "Who had told you
 of my waiting there,
 And of the puzzle
 in my thought?
 —How chanced it that you came
 —by accident?"
 "'T is yet to me a riddle,"
 was my answer,
 "Nor one easy for my solving,
 as it seems;
 For, was it real, my going?
 How I found my way?
 And how I knew the need?
 —I wait the answer.
 Only do I know
 that some strange power
 was drawing me,
 —Full willing to be led
 by such sweet influence."
 But Vashti answered
 not in keeping
 with my thought.
 She said: "I know you came,
 yet sometimes it has seemed
 't was all a dream.
 —Did it seem real
 to you?"
 "I thought it real,"
 I said,

"But found that I, indeed,
had only dreamed
of going to you!"

"Nay," she said,
"you were not dreaming
—Know we not and well
that neither dreamed,
and all was real?"

"Aye, all was real," I answered,
now in happy mood,
"For *you are real*,
whom I had thought
a dream—

Unless it be indeed,
that we are dreaming now!"
Then Vashti laughed again
her silvery laugh
bewitching to my heart.

"Methinks this is no dream,"
she said,

"For you seem real as I,
and if we both are real,
we are not dreaming!"

"Aye, unless it be," I said,
"that only dreams are real
and all the rest imagined.

—Let us prove the dream
that was no dream,
Or test the real,
that seemed a dream:

What was your question
that I answered
in the office?"

"This: 'What is our Life
—its meaning
and its purpose?'"

"And my answer?"

"On the sheet
that lay before me,
With my hand you wrote:
'T is by self-effort we progress
—advance to higher planes
—to larger life.'"

"And then?"

"Next I had questioned
if there were no Love-Life?"

"And my answer?"

" 'Truly there is one,' you said,
'Both here and otherwhere;'
't was thus you answered,"

"Asked you nothing more?"

"Yes, this: 'What is the best
in Life?'"

"And what my writing
in response?"

But Vashti held her answer.
"Tell me, lest in dream, again,
I lose the real!"

" 'T is Love,' you wrote,"
she said.

"And is it not the best
—was I not right?"

So questioned I of Vashti,
and my voice grew tender,
over my controlling.

Vashti made some halt
to saying,

But I held her to my question
till she answered:

and her word was—"Yes."
Then waited I no longer
in the daring of my fate:

And said:

"But only is it best of all *for me*
if it be *Vashti's* love;

—Will Vashti tell me

I may have the best?

O Vashti, say not nay
to this my seeking—

For it is my best I ask;
aye, 'tis my all in life,
all else would be a dream."

Then was her hand in mine,
and, in her answer, came to me
all I had willed to have

—So it had come to me, at last,
by seeking, finding,

It had come by law unerring
—now was Vashti real
—and mine.

—

Beside me, while I write
the ending

Of this story of my dream,
(if one may call a thing so real,
a dream,)

A woman of rare beauty sits,
and in her arms a babe,
While she—the mother—croons,
and sweetly—O, so sweetly,
and as tenderly,

The lullaby I heard before,
heard in my vision real.

I love this woman and her babe,
and they are all the world
to me.

As runs the lover's song:

"No world were this old world,
if it were not for these
—my loved ones."

Need I say that Vashti
is the name of her
—the mother—

Singing to our babe
in sweetest slumber
of its life?

And we have named the babe
—we call her Ethel.

Across the way
has been prepared
a little home;

And soon within its walls
will come to dwell two lovers.

These are Jacob,
who is in our hearts a brother,
And our sister Ruth,
who soon will be his wife.

Beside this home
is yet another, dear to us,
Where live the older ones
in restful comfort,
and with John.

And John still mourns,
but not as once,
For he has found a Hope
that links the Future
with the Present.

Aye, with John
has Love and Hope
been reconciled;

And he has found,
and in this life itself,

A joy, a purpose,
and a meaning.

John is well beloved by all,
by men and maids,
For he is ever true

and loyal.
Fellowship, and much, has he
with woman

—Such companionship
as has no thought
of tend'rest ties of Love

—No deeper sentiment
than is the warmth
of friendship;

—'T is the fellowship of humans
—brothers, sisters
Of the larger Family

Divine.
And in his life and bearing,

John is teaching others
That on higher planes,
where man and woman

Shall have risen
to their larger powers,

There is joy
in soul companionship,
in fellowship,
Between the man and woman,
that is kin to Love.

So ends this Story
 of my Vision
—Ends as Life must end
 in some beginning new;
And that beginning
 well may mean
 a larger living.

More; to me,
 this larger living here
 Will ever mean
 the happiness of Love
 —Of Manhood true,
 of Wifehood, Motherhood,
 And (type of newer Life)
 of Babes.

AFTERMATH.

We speak a truism when we say that life's journey is one of struggle, one of some hardship, of buffeting currents, of overcoming obstacles. When we question what is the purpose of it all, none may deny if we answer that it is that he who engages in this struggle shall make progress.

If the struggle be for every human being, let us say that it is for every human being to have the good of it—that every man and woman shall have all opportunity for progress. That no bar in the way of one's progress be placed there by another, is the least of all to ask.

Let us go further and say it is a praiseworthy desire or ambition, as well as a right, for every soul born of woman to strive to reach the highest level of its possibilities.

At the best, the journey of life is a difficult one and one beset with dangers. There are chances, many to one, of losing the way; and it may be that the chances are only one to many that it shall be found again;—unless it be after a long time of wandering (for we must hope that no one's way will be lost beyond finding).

Be that as it may, one thing is clear. If the obstacles in the way of us are insurmountable at all, it is only by the force of will—determined and persistent—of will so indomitable as almost to prove the divine power within the soul.

Like a race is this journey of progress, solitary and independent though it may seem to be in its character. Rather is it not a series of races? If not at the beginning, the time comes to the many, before they have trudged far along life's pathway, when it is forced upon them to compete with their fellows.

As fellow travelers, let us say that our world is divided into two great camps. At least for purposes of comparison, this division is one very real.

One of these camps is made up of those who are weaker than are those in the other camp. It is made up of individuals who are weaker physically, almost beyond controversy. Are they weaker intellectually? Some say yes; but we say, not of necessity. Let us admit that under the existing conditions—forced and unnecessary, it may be, they are actually and practically weaker intellectually. But in other ways they are stronger. At least they are stronger spiritually, if only under the existing conditions.

In all the long past this weaker camp has been under control of the other and stronger one. In all the long centuries, have limitations been put upon it, and exactions been made of it. Of the limitations, has been traditional conventionalism; of the requirements, actual devotion to the interests of the dominant camp.

As to this devotion, it has almost been demanded of the weaker camp that the need for self-progress of the individuals within it be forgotten in the desire to favor and assist the progress of those in the stronger camp. Almost have the weaker ones forgotten that they had a race to make for themselves, and that it was a race not to be made by proxy.

One may almost say that a disparity always has existed, and that it was maintained inexorably by the master camp, and has been resignedly submitted to, by the other and weaker camp.

In this progress, greater or less, that both camps have made, there has been one development touching upon the

very disparity of which we speak. It is an awakening--an awakening to the enormity and unreasonableness of the disparity that has existed. The awakening has not been confined to one camp, and it has been almost sudden.

With this awakening, partial and recent though it may be, there already has been marked progress toward emancipation of the element that has been under limitations, repressions and exactions.

This result is in line with general progress. Such progress is the order of the day. It means changes that are revolutionary. It means ultimate and early disintegration of all blind, unreasoning forces--forces of error, superstition, tyrannical oppression, selfish exactions, old-time prerogatives, assumed superiorities, class privileges, monopolies of birth-rights.

In this purifying of the air, in this justifying of all claims, in this right-setting of wrongs, in this explosion of fallacies, there will be by-and-by nothing left of these forces that have always impeded progress. Among the things going and to go, there is one thing that could not long continue to exist as the solitary unrighted wrong--the only unrevolutionized anomaly. What is that one thing? Do you ask? Upon my word, I believe you do. I will tell you:

It is that disparity of which I have been speaking.

Almost does it seem that some of us look to see this anomaly continue intact all through the clash of the breaking up of worlds of old traditions and conditions; and the reason for our unpreparedness for a change may be that for a long time there was little sign of any breaking up at all. This has indeed been one of the most conservative of all forces; but its strength seems now well-nigh spent. The break has been made at last, and it is its very suddenness and its rapidity of movement that makes us draw our hands across our eyes to find if we are awake or dreaming.

Let me tell you--confreres of the major camp--we are not dreaming; what our eyes see to-day is cold actuality, and

we shall have all opportunity to get full accustomed to it all—and more. So rapid is the movement—though peaceful the revolution—we well may question if it is not now being proven that spirituality is a force greater than physical strength and intellectual powers combined! Events are answering that (with right in its favor) it is indeed the greater force. It is stronger in the end—even if it be long, long, long in overcoming the regnant force of what has been well established in the minds of men as a finality.

Let us, in plain words, localize the application. Let us admit that this century almost closed upon woman enthralled in the limitations of exacting conventionalities and traditions. In numberless ways has she been burdened and hampered, even beyond the necessities of her being. Though she had to run a race, even as man, for the very same need of life-preservation, as well as for her own growth—her *progress*, has she not been handicapped and obstructed in a hundred ways where man is free?

It is a question, if man so afflicted would have had the courage to live.

In all her weakness—burdened, hampered, handicapped, is it not true that this glorious century is now closing upon the drama of woman contending (against the conservatism of resistance) actually for the privilege of right of way, in the race?

Almost I might have written tragedy for drama.

It is true, fellows, and the time has come for you to see this truth in all its bareness and ugliness, and to admit that it is an unwholesome fact that demands recognition. It is time, too, to admit that whatever excuse there was for our fathers, a knowledge of the truth has robbed you and me of even the excuse of ignorance.

Wanting even so poor an excuse, we well may learn what is demanded of us.

An appeal to man that involves the rights of woman, ought to be made on the higher ground of justice. That

would be the ground for an effective appeal to woman in the interest of man. But, methinks, there is other ground for a more effective appeal to man for woman's sake. And that? What else could it be than that of self-interest?

Then let us to that lower level; for man is in question here.

Remember that, whether we will or no, all that will be asked of us is coming, and quickly. So our virtue will yet be a necessity.

Let us then make our peace with the inevitable.

Let us determine that now and forever woman shall be her own voice, and need no arbiter. In whatever strength of superiority that may be ours, let us vow allegiance to the incoming force.

Yes, the inevitable is upon us. The spirit of the age is upon woman, and her strength, under the spur of the Philistine assaults of the traditions of centuries, will burst her bonds. Her spiritual strength has been even greater than that strength which is of the order of Samson.

The spirit of fair play may not be in us; and we may have a hope to deny her, as we have done in the centuries past. Then let our colder judgment come to our aid, and make us her champion for the good it will be in the end to ourselves. If within the deeper heart of us we can rouse this spirit of championship, though we do it for our own good—it will be of help to our sister. Now is the call and opportunity for yeoman service to woman in the line of man's own interests.

Listen. It continues to be possible for us to impede woman's progress. We may make her every forward step a hardship and her path one of thorns to the flesh. Boys with early promise of the brutal masculinity of a perverted manhood, may hoot and jeer at each innovation, and cause the sensitive heart heroic of devoted martyrdom to bleed. Men may hurt by every form of flippant act of unmanliness—by inconclusive smart talk, by sorry jesting, by ill-bred stare,

We can hurt and sting—God only knows how much—but we *cannot stop the movement.*

The blue-laws of Connecticut are incomprehensible to us to-day, and now, near the close of the century, the last of them (long a dead letter) has been repealed—forever repealed, in mild, considerate derision. And it may not be far in the next century—if indeed, it come not now—when our own stupid battling against woman's progress shall be full evidence against us of something at best to be considerably pardoned because of the coarse animal within us. And this is our plea—that we coin some virtue of our necessity, and bow to the inevitable—which this time is the fair and the invincible.

Our time is short, and let us make hay while the sun shines. My stock of proverbs of selfishness is unequal to the need; but there is something more to remind ourselves of:

Always will woman—however advanced, however robed—be woman. Always will she delight in the burden of service and devotion—it is in the very soul of her to do it. Always will the voice of a child touch her heart, the color of a ribbon please her fancy, the flash of a gem sparkle her eye.

We always have loved her, and even while we have abused her, we have said in our hearts—God bless her! Always have we been willing to spill our blood to protect her—from others. Always has her smile been a flash of heaven's light, and the denial of it has made this world almost too bleak for life.

Come, then, let us reason together; and in our bowing to the inevitable, let this be our speech to the invincible:

“What you shall do, and eat, and wear, and how you shall live, shall be forever more a matter of your own choosing. With your choice, at all times, we shall have nothing to do. Only when we see you hampered, hindered, limited or burdened by any who have no right to impede your progress,—only then shall your affair be ours, and it be our right to interfere. When this comes, and you need championship,

may it be our good fortune to be of those whose championship will win your smile.

In all ways of your own choosing, you shall be your own arbiter. Some of us shall make this our vow; and some there may be who will dally and hesitate. If so, when the time shall come for the smile of approval, it will be their lot to envy others who, however little more deserving at heart they may have been, will have had the good sense which meets the reward of better deserving. And the thought comes to me here, that even this privilege of championship may be lost to us; for if woman shall have to depend upon her independence to save herself from injustice at our own hands, she will have independence enough to decline our championship in the saving of her from injustice at the hands of others.

Sorry will be the day—if it come—when the privilege and pleasure of helping woman is lost to me—because of the unworthiness of my manhood!

Brothers, give heed.

A pitiable plea is this, methinks, when remembering the claims of woman upon us. The writer has had mother, sisters, wife and daughters. What there is left to him of femininity—mother and daughters—were it taken from him, where is the vocabulary to express the utter desolation of heart that it would mean!

And who is he that hath not in life, or memory, something to bind him closely into one great bond of sympathy with his thought through devotion to at least a mother?

If on this beautiful, green earth there be one so callous as to be unsympathetic at this point—at this touch of nature—God pity him for his trackless wanderings. His loss is punishment enough and we have no blame for him.

Surely, this itself is enough to lift the appeal above the level of self and self-interest. Surely some of you will respond, and say that it is the higher appeal that is the stronger one. For any to do this is to afford a rare new hope—a hope for the emancipation also—of the *masculine*,

Lo! the spirit
 of a heart heroic,
Who in his life was weak
 as men are weak,
But strong
 as man is strong,
Is speaking from the century gone,
 as one illumined.
His voice is eloquent
 for woman whom he loved.
This is his pleading:
“While the fate of empires
 and the fall of kings
 engage our thoughts,
While quacks of state
 produce their plans,
While even children lisp
 the rights of man,
Other rights
 have merit of attention;
Give them heed;
 —they are the rights of woman.”
“Truce with kings
 and truce with constitutions,
With bloody armaments
 and revolutions;”
Other majesty
 in thine own day had sway
And (blessed be
 thy wayward, gentle memory,
 O Robert Burns!)
Will have more sway
 in days to come
Than in our day, or thine,
 —the Majesty of Woman.

A CONVERSATION.

Said his friend: "Your book seems to have found some favor with the critics."

"Yes," answered the book-maker, "with the limited circle of friendly ones who have read the manuscript, at least. Particularly," he continued, laughingly, "those parts of the book that I did not write."

The expression of the friend's face was an interrogation.

The book-maker explained: "What do I mean? This, that in the writing I freely used the work of other writers where it served my purpose."

"Ah! then the book is not all original!"

"Not wholly; and if I needed justification for the use of outside material, it has come in the unstinted praise that has been given the very portions borrowed. I thought it useless, for instance, to attempt to write anything better about love than Boyesen wrote, and I used it. One friendly critic who returned my manuscript with sundry comments, had written along the margin of Boyesen's thought: 'This is sublime.' "

"Did he know who wrote it?"

"No he supposed it was all mine—so with the proof-reader, Stoically he read till we reached that same passage, and said, 'This is fine.' When I told him that it was not purely original, he said, 'Blessed be plagiarism.' "

"Did he mean, that your reproduction of the thought would immortalize it?"

"He did not explain. He may have meant that it was the 'saving clause' of the book up to that point!"

"Boyesen's work is very captivating," said his friend, "I never see his name that I do not read what it stands for."

The book-maker grew sad and contemplative. "At the very time I had in my thought the pleasure of writing to Boyesen my acknowledgment of obligation, came the unwelcome news of his sudden going out."

"Well, your book is not all borrowed," said his friend, generously, "and I doubt not it has original passages equal to what is borrowed."

"Very kind of you," said the gratified book-maker. "What part did you like best?"

"The Scroll—Vashti, the King, and the feasters, and the lesson it teaches."

"Ah! that, taken from the Bible, is the least original of all," said the book-maker, disappointedly.

"Well, at least you must have credit for frankness," said his friend, consolingly.

"Not necessarily," answered the book-maker, persistently "It would be folly for one to draw upon others, so freely as I have done, and not acknowledge the source. A lady who read my manuscript said that a part of it reminded her of Prentice Mulford. I told her that might easily be true, for I had drawn it mainly from a chapter of his, on 'Dress.'"

"Was all the rest original?"

"No, an artist friend brought back the manuscript, saying he was delighted, especially with the song sung by the old man whose plaint was "the old path up the hill: gone forever." It happens that this is one of the only two songs that are not original.

"So it goes. I owe the best part of the thought taught by the teacher, 'dreamy, introspective,' to Birch Arnold, taken from the ephemeral pages of a metropolitan newspaper. A friendly critic wrote of this part as 'true and helpful gospel,' and said that 'nothing but highest praise could be given to those pages.'"

"Shakespeare was a plagiarist, too," said his friend, helpfully.

"Nay, mine friend, there were no comfort in that

thought. In one's right mind, one would not choose to be a plagiarist, even with so great an example as a Shakespeare. But Shakespeare was no plagiarist. Only as a boy was he a poacher, and it was not in literary preserves.

"And I, in my humbler way, did not plagiarize. All writing should be impersonal. The personality of the writer does not exist except through his work. It is at best remote, and incidental to that work. From the higher standpoint, it should be the purpose of a writer to produce the very best work within his powers. If by the use of material available from outside sources, one may better his own work, it is in the interest of the reader that it be done."

"You do not like plagiarism," said his friend, in a humorous vein, "you favor, rather, a process that would be called 'conscious cerebration.'"

"That is, indeed, my literary creed," responded the book-maker. I believe in that conscious cerebration which is not plagiarism, which admits an even freer use of the work of others, but involves due acknowledgment of the source of one's inspiration!"

"But Shakespeare did not give credit to others; was he not a plagiarist?"

"We have but to remember how little we know about Shakespeare biographically, to realize how impersonal he was as a writer. How easy to conceive that the sense of his personality was lost in the work of his genius. Like Shakespeare the actor, Shakespeare the writer seemed to sink his own personality in his creations. One may easily believe that Shakespeare so far forgot the very question of authorship (as being a matter of any interest or importance) that he felt no need either to claim or disclaim originality. Shakespeare did not seem even to realize that his work was immortal."

"If he were writing to-day," said his friend, "he would be able better to realize his own genius."

"And would have no need to plagiarize," answered the book-maker.

OPINIONS OF CRITICS.

"A truly inspired work."

"It is surprisingly graceful, metaphysical and dramatic. It is unique in literature."

"In an entertaining and true picture are shown the whims of Fashion, and the foolishness of certain customs and costumes. The evolution of the modern woman is well told; woman's 'right to suffer' is vividly and exquisitely drawn. This can be well said of Marvel Kayve: he is continually interesting."

772 Walnut Street,
Chicago, November 15, 1895.

I have just read "Vashti; a Romance of the Wheel," and with great interest. This work is written with the pen of a poet and the logic of a philosopher. The picture of human weakness and strength, meanness and nobility, is painted by a master brain and hand.

It is profound in its analysis of mental habits and conventional ethics common to society.

The thread of truth pervading, and on which it is built, is of the eternal ethics. Its exalted ideal of man and woman and of their relations, must make it a potent agency for uplifting all who are capable of aspiration.

It is a grand production, and must have a great sale. I hope it may be read by tens of thousands.

Yours sincerely,

LUCINDA B. CHANDLER.



